

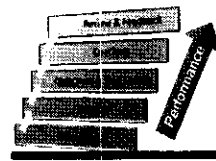
Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
Division of Administration (DOA)
HRSS/Staff Development Unit



Team Work



Leadership



Performance



Ethics



Writing

Article of the Week
2009 Articles Booklet

Forward

In 2009, as part of its endeavor to improve the services of the Career Resource Center, HRSS/Staff Development Unit took the initiative to search and compile professional articles from the internet and share them with staff members on a weekly basis. This initiative focused on articles mainly related to *UN Core Values, Core Competencies, and Managerial Competencies*. Moreover articles on *Career Support, Self Development and Basic Soft Skills* were covered extensively.

While identifying the weekly articles, a maximum care was taken in not only ensuring the authentication and professionalism of content of the articles but also that it was inline with the UN values. Respective the intellectual property of authors of the articles and credit was given to the source of the articles and cited accordingly.

More than forty-six articles, categorized into ten major entries, were shared with staff and were accessible both through posting them on iSeek (UN Intranet) and broadcast message.

HRSS/Staff Development Unit considers these articles as alternative means of developing staff awareness on UN Core Values, Core Competencies and Managerial Competencies, and improving their soft skills.

The unit will continue to manifest its commencement and devotion for the achievement of its vision and play its leading role through introducing career support and learning initiatives.

This Booklet, that comprises more than forty-six weekly articles of 2009, can be considered as the beginning but end.

Enjoy reading these articles!

Table of Content

<u>FORWARD</u>	1
<u>PLANNING & ORGANIZING.</u>	1
1) PERSONAL TIME MANAGEMENT	2
2) EFFECTIVE MEETING MANAGEMENT	10
<u>COMMUNICATION SKILLS.</u>	14
3) LISTEN WITH YOUR EYES - UNDERSTANDING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION	15
4) ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION	17
5) THE MEANING OF YOUR COMMUNICATION AND ITS EFFECT	22
6) EFFECTIVE PRAISE, EFFECTIVE CRITICISM	24
7) ORAL PRESENTATION SKILLS	26
8) THE MAGIC OF DIALOGUE	29
9) DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE AT WORK	34
10) IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE	41
<u>CAREER SUPPORT AND SELF DEVELOPMENT</u>	43
11) LIFE-AFTER-RETIREMENT: HOW TO ENJOY YOUR NEW LIFESTYLE	44
12) COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: LEARNING AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM	46
13) BECOMING A SAGE: THE KEYS TO LIFE-LONG SELF - DEVELOPMENT	56
14) PROMOTE YOUR PERSONAL GROWTH AND MOTIVATION	61
15) QUALITIES OF A GOOD MENTOR	63
16) CAREER MOBILITY: A CHOICE OR NECESSITY?	66
17) INTERVIEWING SKILLS FOR APPLICANTS: TOP TIPS FOR TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.	71
18) THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING	74
<u>PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT</u>	78
19) GETTING THE MOST FROM PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS	79
20) IMPROVING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	83
<u>TEAM WORK</u>	88
21) KEYS TO TEAM BUILDING SUCCESS	89
22) KEYS TO BUILDING GREAT WORK TEAMS	92
23) COLLABORATION AT WORK	98
<u>STAFF WELLNESS</u>	100

24) HOW TO GET WORK-LIFE BALANCE	101
25) SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE	104
26) STRESS MANAGEMENT	106
27) MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS:	113
28) GET A LIFE! – LIFE WORK BALANCE	115
<u>CLIENT ORIENTATION</u>	117
29) SUCCESSFUL HANDLING OF CUSTOMER SERVICE ISSUES	118
<u>MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP</u>	122
30) MANAGING MEETINGS EFFECTIVELY	123
31) CHANGE AND EMPLOYEES' INVOLVEMENT	128
32) EMBRACING CHANGE	130
33) PERSONAL COURAGE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION AT WORK	132
34) EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT	134
<u>CREATIVITY & PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS</u>	138
35) HOW TO BE CREATIVE	139
36) DEVELOPING YOUR PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS	142
<u>RESPECT FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY</u>	145
37) THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE	146
38) MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY	149
<u>ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	153
39) THE POWER OF ACCOUNTABILITY	154
<u>PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND INTEGRITY</u>	157
40) WHY PEOPLE BREAK ETHICS CODES?	158
41) ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE	162
42) CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS	166
43) BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE	169
44) PROFESSIONALISM IN THE WORKPLACE	172
45) OFFICE ETIQUETTE	177
<u>REFERENCE LINKS</u>	180

Planning & Organizing.

“It pays to plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.”

1) Personal Time Management

Time passes, quickly. This article looks at the basics of Personal Time Management and describes how the Manager can assume control of this basic resource.

The "Eff" words

The three "Eff" words are [concise OED]:

- ◆ Effective - having a definite or desired effect
- ◆ Efficient - productive with minimum waste or effort
- ◆ Effortless - seemingly without effort; natural, easy

Personal Time Management is about winning the "Eff" words: making them apply to you and your daily routines.

What is Personal Time Management?

Personal Time Management is about controlling the use of your most valuable (and undervalued) resource. Consider these two questions: what would happen if you spent company money with as few safeguards as you spend company time, when was the last time you scheduled a review of your time allocation?

The absence of Personal Time Management is characterized by last minute rushes to meet dead-lines, meetings which are either double booked or achieve nothing, days which seem somehow to slip unproductively by, crises which loom unexpected from nowhere. This sort of environment leads to inordinate stress and degradation of performance: it must be stopped.

Poor time management is often a symptom of over confidence: techniques which used to work with small projects and workloads are

simply reused with large ones. But inefficiencies which were insignificant in the small role are ludicrous in the large. You can not drive a motor bike like a bicycle, nor can you manage a supermarket-chain like a market stall. The demands, the problems and the payoffs for increased efficiency are all larger as your responsibility grows; you must learn to apply proper techniques or be bettered by those who do. Possibly, the reason Time Management is poorly practiced is that it so seldom forms a measured part of appraisal and performance review; what many fail to foresee, however, is how intimately it is connected to aspects which do.

Personal Time Management has many facets. Most managers recognize a few, but few recognize them all. There is the simple concept of keeping a well ordered diary and the related idea of planned activity.

Article of the Week, 2009 – Planning and Organizing

But beyond these, it is a tool for the systematic ordering of your influence on events; it underpins many other

managerial skills such as Effective Delegation and Project Planning.

Personal Time Management is a set of tools which allow you to:

- ◆ eliminate wastage
- ◆ be prepared for meetings
- ◆ refuse excessive workloads
- ◆ monitor project progress
- ◆ allocate resource (time) appropriate to a task's importance
- ◆ ensure that long term projects are not neglected
- ◆ plan each day efficiently
- ◆ Plan each week effectively and to do so simply with a little self-discipline.

Since Personal Time Management is a management process just like any other, it must be planned, monitored and regularly reviewed. In the following sections, we will examine the basic methods and functions of Personal Time Management. Since true understanding depends upon experience, you will be asked to take part by looking at aspects of your own work. If you do not have time to this right now - ask yourself: why not?

Current Practice

What this article is advocating is the adoption of certain practices which will give you greater control over the use and allocation of your primary resource: *time*. Before we start on the future, it is worth considering the present. This involves the simplistic task of keeping a note of how you spend your time for a suitably long period of time (say a week). I say simplistic since all you have to do is create a simple table, photocopy half-a-dozen copies and carry it around with you filling in a row every time you change activity. After one week,

allocate time (start as you mean to go on) to reviewing this log.

Waste Disposal

We are not looking here to create new categories of work to enhance efficiency (that comes later) but simply to eliminate wastage in your current practice. The average IEE Chartered Engineer earns about 27,000 pounds per annum; about 12.50 pounds per hour, say 1 pound every 5 minutes; for how many 5 minute sections of your activity would you have paid a pound? The first step is a critical appraisal of how you spend your time and to question

Article of the Week, 2009 – Planning and Organizing

some of your habits. In your time log, identify periods of time which might have been better used.

There are various sources of waste. The most common are social: telephone calls, friends dropping by, conversations around the coffee machine. It would be foolish to eliminate all non-work related activity (we all need a break) but if it's a choice between chatting to Harry in the afternoon and meeting the next pay-related deadline ... Your time log will show you if this is a problem and you might like to do something about it before your boss does.

In your time log, look at each work activity and decide objectively how much time each was *worth* to you, and compare that with the time you actually spent on it. An afternoon spent polishing an internal memo into a Pulitzer prize winning piece of provocative prose is waste; an hour spent debating the leaving present of

a colleague is waste; a minute spent sorting out the paper-clips is waste (unless relaxation). This type of activity will be reduced naturally by managing your own time since you will not allocate time to the trivial. Specifically, if you have a task to do, decide before hand how long it should take and work to that deadline - then move on to the next task.

Another common source of waste stems from delaying work which is unpleasant by finding distractions which are less important or unproductive. Check your log to see if any tasks are being delayed simply because they are dull or difficult.

Time is often wasted in changing between activities. For this reason it is useful to group similar tasks together thus avoiding the start-up delay of each. The time log will show you where these savings can be made. You may want then to initiate a routine which deals with these on a fixed but regular basis.

Doing Subordinate's Work

Having considered what complete waste is, we now turn to what is merely inappropriate. Often it is simpler to do the job yourself. Using the stamp machine to frank your own letters ensures they leave by the next post; writing the missing summary in the latest progress report from your junior is more pleasant than sending it back (and it lets you choose the emphasis). Rubbish!

Large gains can be made by assigning secretarial duties to secretaries: they regularly catch the next post, they type a lot faster than you. Your subordinate should be told about the missing section and told how (and why) to slant it. If you have a task which could be done by a subordinate, use the next occasion to start training him/her to do it instead of doing it yourself - you will need to spend some time monitoring the task

Article of the Week, 2009 – Planning and Organizing

thereafter, but far less that in doing it yourself.

Doing the work of others

A major impact upon your work can be the tendency to help others with their's. Now, in the spirit of an open and harmonious work environment it is obviously desirable that you should be willing to help out - but check your work log and decide how much time you spend on your own work and how much you spend on others'. For instance, if you spend a morning checking the grammar and spelling in the training material related to you last project, then that is waste. Publications should do the proof-reading, which is their job, they are better at it than you; you should deal at the technical level.

The remaining problem is your manager. Consider what periods in your work log were used to perform tasks that your manager either repeated or simply negated by ignoring it or redefining the task, too late. Making your manager efficient is a very difficult task, but where it impinges upon your work and performance you must take the bull by the horns (or whatever) and confront the issue.

Managing your manager may seem a long way from Time Management but no one impacts upon your use of time more than your immediate superior. If a task is ill defined - seek clarification (is that a one page summary or a ten page report?). If seemingly random alterations are

asked in your deliverables, ask for the reasons and next time clarify these and similar points at the beginning. If the manager is difficult, try writing a small specification for each task before beginning it and have it agreed. While you can not tactfully hold your manager to this *contract* if he/she has a change of mind, it will at least cause him/her to consider the issues early on, before you waste your time on false assumptions.

External Appointments

The next stage of Personal Time Management is to start taking control of your time. The first problem is appointments. Start with a simple appointments diary. In this book you will have (or at least should have) a complete list of all your known appointments for the foreseeable future. If you have omitted your regular ones (since you remember them anyway) add them now.

Your appointments constitute your interaction with other people; they are the agreed interface between your activities and those of others; they are determined by external obligation. They often fill the diary. Now, be ruthless and eliminate the unnecessary. There may be committees where you can not productively contribute or where a subordinate might be (better) able to participate. There may be long lunches which could be better run as short conference calls. There may be interviews which last three times as long as necessary because they are

Article of the Week, 2009 – Planning and Organizing

scheduled for a whole hour. Eliminate the wastage starting today.

The next stage is to add to your diary lists of other, personal activity which will enhance your use of the available time. Consider: what is the most important type of activity to add to your diary? No:- stop reading for a moment and really, consider.

The single most important type of activity is those which will save you time: allocate time to save time, a stitch in time saves days. And most importantly of all, always allocate time to time management: at least five minutes each and every day.

Scheduling Projects

The most daunting external appointments are deadlines: often, the handover of deliverables. Do you leave the work too late? Is there commonly a final panic towards the end? Are the last few hectic hours often marred by errors? If so, use Personal Time Management.

- ◆ check the specification - are you sure that you agree on what is to be delivered
- ◆ break the task down into small sections so that you can estimate the time needed for each, and monitor progress
- ◆ schedule reviews of your progress (e.g. after each sub-task) so that you can respond quickly to difficulties

Like most management ideas, this is common sense. Some people, however, refute it because in practice they find that it merely shows the lack of time for a project which must be done anyway. This is simply daft!

For each appointment left in the diary, consider what actions you might take to ensure that no time is wasted: plan to avoid work by being prepared. Thus, if you are going to a meeting where you will be asked to comment on some report, allocate time to read it so avoiding delays in the meeting and increasing your chances of making the right decision the first time. Consider what actions need to be done before AND what actions must be done to follow-up. Even if the latter is unclear before the event, you must still allocate time to review the outcome and to plan the resulting action. Simply mark in your diary the block of time necessary to do this and, when the time comes, do it.

The basic idea is that your management of personal deadlines should be achieved with exactly the same techniques you would use in a large project:

If simple project planning and time management show that the task can not be done, then it will not be done - but by knowing at the start, you have a chance to do something about it.

Article of the Week, 2009 – Planning and Organizing

An impossible deadline affects not only your success but also that of others. Suppose a product is scheduled for release too soon because you agree to deliver too early. Marketing and Sales will prepare customers to expect the product showing why they really need it - but it will not arrive. The customers will be dissatisfied or even lost, the competition will have advanced warning, and all because you agreed to do the impossible.

You can avoid this type of problem. By practising time management, you will always have a clear understanding of how you spend your time and what time is unallocated. If a new task is thrust upon you, you can estimate whether it is practical. The project planning tells you how much time is needed and the time management tells you how much time is available.

There are four ways to deal with impossible deadlines:

- ◆ Get the deadline extended
- ◆ Scream for more resources
- ◆ Get the Deliverable redefined to something practical
- ◆ State the position clearly so that your boss (*and his/her boss*) have fair warning

If this simple approach seems unrealistic, consider the alternative. If you have an imposed, but unobtainable, deadline and you accept it; then the outcome is *your* assured failure. Of course, there is a fifth option: move to a company with realistic schedules.

One defense tactic is to present your superior with a current list of your obligations indicating what impact the new task will have on these, and ask him/her to assign the priorities: "I can't do them all, which should I slip?". Another tactic is to keep a data base of your time estimates and the actual time taken by each task. This will quickly develop into a source of

valuable data and increase the accuracy of your planning predictions.

There is no reason why you should respond only to externally imposed deadlines. The slightly shoddy product which you hand-over after the last minute rush (and normally have returned for correction the following week) could easily have been polished if only an extra day had been available - so move your personal deadline forward and allow yourself the luxury of leisureed review before the product is shipped.

Taking this a step further, the same sort of review might be applied to the

Article of the Week, 2009 – Planning and Organizing

product at each stage of its development so that errors and rework time are reduced. Thus by allocating time to quality review, you

Finally, for each activity you should estimate how much time it is worth and allocate only that amount. This critical appraisal may even suggest a different approach or method so that the time matches the task's importance. Beware of perfection, it takes too long - allocate time for "fitness for purpose", then stop.

Monitoring Staff

Your Personal Time Management also affects other people, particularly your subordinates. Planning projects means not only allocating your time but also the distribution of tasks; and this should be done in the same planned, monitored and reviewed manner as your own scheduling.

Any delegated task should be specified with an (agreed) end date. As a Manager, you are responsible for ensuring that the tasks allocated to your subordinates are completed successfully. Thus you should ensure that each task is concluded with a deliverable (for instance, a memo to confirm completion) - you make an entry in your diary to check that this has arrived. Thus, if you agree the task for Tuesday, Wednesday should have an entry in your diary to check the deliverable. This simple device allows you to monitor progress and to initiate action as necessary.

save time in rework; and this is all part of project planning supported and monitored by your time management.

Long term Objectives

There are many long term objectives which the good Manager must achieve, particularly with regard to the development, support and motivation of his/her work-team. Long term objectives have the problem of being important but not urgent, they do not have deadlines, they are distant and remote. For this reason, it is all too easy to ignore them in favor of the urgent and immediate. Clearly a balance must be struck.

The beauty of Time Management is that the balance can be decided objectively (without influence from immediate deadlines) and self-imposed through the use of the diary. Simply, a manager might decide that one hour a week should be devoted to personnel issues and would then allocate a regular block of time to that activity. Of course if the factory is on fire, or World War III is declared, the manager may have to re-allocate this time in a particular week - but barring such crises, this time should then become sacrosanct and always applied to the same, designated purpose.

Similarly, time may be allocated to staff development and training. So if one afternoon a month is deemed to be a suitable allocation, then simply designate the second Thursday (say) of each month and delegate the

choice of speakers. The actual time spent in managing this sort of long term objective is small, but without that deliberate planning it will not be achieved.

Once you have implemented Personal Time Management, it is worth using some of that control to augment your own career. Some quiet weekend, you should sketch out your own long term objectives and plan a route to them. As you would any long term objective, allocate time to the necessary sub-tasks and monitor your progress. If you do not plan where you want to go, you are unlikely to get there.

Concluding Remarks

Personal Time Management is a systematic application of common sense strategies. It requires little effort, yet it promotes efficient work practices by highlighting wastage and it leads to effective use of time by focusing it on your chosen activities. Personal Time Management does not solve your problems; it reveals them, and provides a structure to implement and monitor solutions. It enables you to take control of your own time - how you use it is then up to you.

2) Effective Meeting Management

Meeting management tends to be a set of skills often overlooked by leaders and managers. The following information is a rather "Cadillac" version of meeting management suggestions. The reader might pick which suggestions best fits the particular culture of their own organization. Keep in mind that meetings are very expensive activities when one considers the cost of labor for the meeting and how much can or cannot get done in them. So take meeting management very seriously.

The process used in a meeting depends on the kind of meeting you

plan to have, e.g., staff meeting, planning meeting, problem solving meeting, etc. However, there are certain basics that are common to various types of meetings. These basics are described below.

(Note that there may seem to be a lot of suggestions listed below for something as apparently simple as having a meeting. However, any important activity would include a long list of suggestions. The list seems to become much smaller once you master how to conduct the activity.)

Selecting Participants

- ◆ The decision about who is to attend depends on what you want to accomplish in the meeting. This may seem too obvious to state, but it's surprising how many meetings occur without the right people there.
- ◆ Don't depend on your own judgment about who should come. Ask several other people for their opinion as well.
- ◆ If possible, call each person to tell them about the meeting, its overall purpose and why their attendance is important.
- ◆ Follow-up your call with a meeting notice, including the purpose of the meeting, where it will be held and when, the list of participants and whom to contact if they have questions.
- ◆ Send out a copy of the proposed agenda along with the meeting notice.
- ◆ Have someone designated to record important actions, assignments and due dates during the meeting. This person should ensure that this information is distributed to all participants shortly after the meeting.

Article of the Week, 2009 – Planning and Organizing

Developing Agendas

- ◆ Develop the agenda together with key participants in the meeting. Think of what overall outcome you want from the meeting and what activities need to occur to reach that outcome. The agenda should be organized so that these activities are conducted during the meeting.
- ◆ In the agenda, state the overall outcome that you want from the meeting
- ◆ Design the agenda so that participants get involved early by having something for them to do right away and so they come on time.
- ◆ Next to each major topic, include the type of action needed, the type of output expected (decision, vote, action assigned to someone), and time estimates for addressing each topic
- ◆ Ask participants if they'll commit to the agenda.
- ◆ Keep the agenda posted at all times.
- ◆ Don't overly design meetings; be willing to adapt the meeting agenda if members are making progress in the planning process.
- ◆ Think about how you label an event, so people come in with that mindset; it may pay to have a short dialogue around the label to develop a common mindset among attendees, particularly if they include representatives from various cultures.

Opening Meetings

- ◆ Always start on time; this respects those who showed up on time and reminds late-comers that the scheduling is serious.
- ◆ Welcome attendees and thank them for their time.
- ◆ Review the agenda at the beginning of each meeting, giving participants a chance to understand all proposed major topics, change them and accept them.
- ◆ Note that a meeting recorder if used will take minutes and provide them back to each participant shortly after the meeting.
- ◆ Model the kind of energy and participant needed by meeting participants.
- ◆ Clarify your role(s) in the meeting.

Establishing Ground Rules for Meetings

You don't need to develop new ground rules each time you have a meeting, surely. However, it pays to have a few basic ground rules that can be used for most of your meetings. These ground rules cultivate the basic ingredients needed for a successful meeting.

- ◆ Four powerful ground rules are: participate, get focus, maintain momentum and reach closure. (You may want a ground rule about confidentiality.)
- ◆ List your primary ground rules on the agenda.
- ◆ If you have new attendees who are not used to your meetings, you might review each ground rule.
- ◆ Keep the ground rules posted at all times.

Time Management

- ◆ One of the most difficult facilitation tasks is time management -- time seems to run out before tasks are completed. Therefore, the biggest challenge is keeping momentum to keep the process moving.
- ◆ You might ask attendees to help you keep track of the time.
- ◆ If the planned time on the agenda is getting out of hand, present it to the group and ask for their input as to a resolution.

Evaluations of Meeting Process

It's amazing how often people will complain about a meeting being a complete waste of time -- but they only say so after the meeting. Get their feedback during the meeting when you can improve the meeting process right away. Evaluating a meeting only at the end of the meeting is usually too late to do anything about participants' feedback.

- ◆ Every couple of hours, conduct 5-10 minutes "satisfaction checks".
- ◆ In a round-table approach, quickly have each participant indicate how they think the meeting is going.

Evaluating the Overall Meeting

- ◆ Leave 5-10 minutes at the end of the meeting to evaluate the meeting; don't skip this portion of the meeting.

Article of the Week, 2009 – Planning and Organizing

- ◆ Have each member rank the meeting from 1-5, with 5 as the highest, and have each member explain their ranking
- ◆ Have the chief executive rank the meeting last.

Closing Meetings

- ◆ Always end meetings on time and attempt to end on a positive note.
- ◆ At the end of a meeting, review actions and assignments, and set the time for the next meeting and ask each person if they can make it or not (to get their commitment)
- ◆ Clarify that meeting minutes and/or actions will be reported back to members in at most a week (this helps to keep momentum going).

Communication Skills.

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

George Bernard Shaw

3) Listen With Your Eyes - Understanding Nonverbal Communication

Is there ever any doubt in your mind as to the mood of a coworker upon their arrival at work? Nonverbal communication is the single most powerful form of communication. More than voice or even words, nonverbal communication cues you in to what is on another person's mind. The best communicators are sensitive to the power of the emotions and thoughts communicated nonverbally.

Nonverbal communication ranges from facial expression to body language. Gestures, signs, and use of space are also important in nonverbal communication. Multicultural differences in body language, facial expression, use of space, and especially, gestures, are enormous and enormously open to misinterpretation.

To gauge your expertise in interpreting nonverbal communication, take these nonverbal communication interpretation quiz questions from the University of California at Santa Cruz. Each link leads to pictorial quiz questions and explanations

One of the funniest – yet saddest – nonverbal exchanges I have ever witnessed occurred in the registrar's office at a major university. A multinational student tried to communicate his problem to an older, white female. He gesticulated constantly waving his hands to punctuate his communication.

He tried to narrow the distance between himself and the university employee who kept backing away to maintain her level of special comfort. By the end of the conversation, the student was chasing her the length of the countertop still gesturing with his hands heatedly. The employee told me later that she had been terrified of the student who was merely trying to tell her that he had already paid the bill he had just received from the university.

One study at UCLA indicated that up to 93 percent of communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal cues. Another study indicated that the impact of a performance was determined 7 percent by the words used, 38 percent by voice quality, and 55 percent by the nonverbal communication.

If you want to mask your feelings or your immediate reaction to information, pay close attention to your nonverbal behavior. You may have your voice and words under control, but your body language including the tiniest facial expressions and movement can give your true thoughts and feelings away. Especially to a skilled reader of nonverbal cues, most of us are really open books.

Here are several tips for improving your reading of nonverbal information. No matter your position at work, improving your skill in interpreting nonverbal communication will add to your

ability to share meaning with another person.

interpretation of nonverbal communication will add depth to your ability to communicate.

Shared meaning is my definition of communication. Correct

Tips for Understanding Nonverbal Communication

- ◆ Recognize that people communicate on many levels. Watch their facial expressions, eye contact, posture, hand and feet movements, body movement and placement, and appearance and passage as they walk toward you. Every gesture is communicating something if you listen with your eyes. Become accustomed to watching nonverbal communication and your ability to read nonverbal communication will grow with practice.
- ◆ If a person's words say one thing and their nonverbal communication says another, you are wont to listen to the nonverbal communication – and that is usually the correct decision
- ◆ Assess job candidates based on their nonverbal communication. You can read volumes from how the applicant sits in the lobby. The nonverbal communication during an interview should also elucidate the candidate's skills, strengths, weaknesses, and concerns for you.
- ◆ Probe nonverbal communication during an investigation or other situation in which you need facts and believable statements. Again, the nonverbal may reveal more than the person's spoken words.
- ◆ When leading a meeting or speaking to a group, recognize that nonverbal cues can tell you:
 - when you've talked long enough,
 - when someone else wants to speak, and
 - the mood of the crowd and their reaction to your remarks

Listen to them and you'll be a better leader and speaker.

Understanding nonverbal communication improves with practice. The first step in practice is to recognize the power of nonverbal communication. I'm sure you've had gut feelings that what a person said to

you was untrue. Listen to your gut. Along with your life experiences, training, beliefs and all that make up your past, it's your inner expert on nonverbal communication.

4) Assertive Communication

Ever end up frustrated after a conversation with someone because you didn't feel like you communicated as well as you would have liked? Ever walk away from a conversation asking yourself what just happened?

Assertiveness is a style of communication that greatly enhances our effectiveness with others and produces the most positive outcomes. Assertiveness can enhance the following:

- * *Improve interpersonal relationships*
- * *Reduce conflicts/anxiety*
- * *Enhance self esteem*
- * *Refrain self respect*
- * *Minimize stress*
- * *Treats others respectfully*
- * *Reduce feelings of helplessness/depression*
- * *Gives a sense of control*

Generally, there are 4 styles of communication.

1. PASSIVE
2. AGGRESSIVE
3. PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE
4. ASSERTIVE

A person operating from the *Passive* style tends to avoid conflict at all costs. This person will internalize discomfort rather than risk upsetting others. This style tends to result in a lose-win situation, and results in feelings of victimization, resentment, and a loss of a sense of control.

A person who uses this style in many of his daily interactions has the underlying belief that other peoples' needs are more important than their own, and that if he speaks up, others will ignore or reject him. This

individual usually has a low sense of self-esteem, and has a difficult time recognizing his/her own needs and knowing how to get them met more appropriately.

The *Aggressive* person creates a win-lose situation. This individual uses intimidation and control to get his/her needs met, and is disrespectful and hurtful to others in communications. This person has the underlying beliefs that power and control are the only way to get needs met. This person operates from a real sense of

inadequacy and may have a lack of empathy for others.

The *Passive-Aggressive* person incorporates elements of both of the previous styles. He tends to use procrastination, forgetfulness, and intentional inefficiency rather than being direct in his communications with others.

The *Assertive* person is direct with the goal of creating a win-win situation. This style respects one's own rights and opinions, as well as those of the other person. This individual operates from the belief that each of us is responsible for solving our own problems, and

neither party in communication has to justify themselves to each other. This person takes responsibility for his own decisions and actions.

Our "preferred" style is influenced by a number of factors. Gender roles often influence our style. Little boys are sometimes culturally conditioned to be "strong", and that winning is what matters most. Little girls are sometimes taught that it is their primary role is to serve others, be nice at all costs, and that self worth is defined by relationships with others. Our parents, our role models, the media, and our own personality all play a role in our communication with others.

WHAT DOES ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION LOOK LIKE?

Much of our communication is **non-verbal**. A person with an assertive communication style has a body language that conveys openness and receptiveness. Posture is upright, movements are fluid and relaxed, tone of voice is clear and with inflection. An assertive person makes good eye contact, and is aware of personal space.

When **giving opinions**, an assertive person is willing to express his opinion, and also is open to hearing other's points of view. He is direct, but not argumentative or threatening. He does not use sarcasm or gossip as a way to communicate. He does not

silently sit back out of fear of not being liked.

When an assertive person receives **feedback from others**, she is able to listen and accept what the other person has to say, even if she doesn't agree. Many people have a hard time receiving feedback, even if it's positive. How many times has someone paid you a compliment and you simply dismiss it, or minimize it rather than hearing it and simply saying "thanks"! No one likes to hear negative feedback, but an assertive person does not react to criticism by counter-attacking, denying, or feeling anxious or inadequate. She makes conscious choices about how to respond to the criticism.

She may ask for clarification to make sure she is really hearing what the other person is saying. She can validate the others' feelings, without

necessarily agreeing with the person's feedback. If the negative feedback is valid, she accepts responsibility.

WHAT IS ASSERTIVE NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION?

Assertiveness is defined as the ability to stand up for yourself without being overtly rude or aggressive at the same time. A person who is non-assertive will often be either one of two things, and this is aggressive or passive. In today's world, falling under either one of these extremes is negative, and will often block you from getting the things you want in life.

A person that is passive is an individual who people will be quick to walk on. If people think you're weak, or that you're easy to use or abuse, then they will often abuse you. Those who are passive tend to be individuals who suffer from low self esteem.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is the individual who is aggressive. While these people are quick to defend themselves and their rights, they often do so in a manner which offends a lot of people in the process.

While aggressive people are often more successful than those who are passive, this success is often a perfect victory, since they often make so many enemies in the process that their success is usually short lived. Another problem with aggressive people is that they often believe that their beliefs and feelings are more important than everyone around them.

Non-verbal assertive communication is a form of communication in which you are assertive without saying anything. This form of assertiveness requires you to make good use of your body language in order to get your point across. A person who is assertive is someone who understands that everyone has rights. These rights not only include legal rights which are defined by law, but organic laws which supersede it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ASSERTIVE LISTENING

The first step towards performing non-verbal assertiveness is to listen to what is being said to you. When you listen to people, you let them know that you understand what they're saying. Second, you allow people to know that you understand what they are trying to say to you.

When it comes to non-verbal assertive communication, one thing that you must keep in mind is that understanding someone is different from agreeing with them. Someone could be telling you something that you will never agree with, but you can still use assertive listening to

show them that you're paying attention to what they're saying.

When you talk to people, look at them directly. When you do this, you show them that you're giving them your undivided attention. It also may not be a bad idea to lean forward, as this always shows you're listening. The best posture to have in a situation like this is a relaxed one.

Another form of listening that is closely connected to assertiveness is called assertive listening. With this style of listening, you maintain a relaxed state of mind while you talk with others. This allows you to better understand what is being said, which

will allow you to ask questions for clarification.

Even when you do not say anything, it is possible for you to communicate a lot to those around you. Some of the ways in which you communicate in this manner include your posture, the gestures you make, the expressions on your face, and your eyes.

Your personal appearance is important as well. Anyone can use these things to communicate various things to others around them. Those who you communicate with will use these non-verbal cues to determine whether or not you're sincere, and these non-verbal cues are far more important than anything you say.

EXAMPLES OF BAD NON-VERBAL ASSERTIVENESS

There are a number of ways you can communicate bad signals to those you come in contact with, and some of these things include little eye contact, gestures which make you seem nervous, or slouching.

If you behave in these ways, people will question the sincerity of anything you say, and you will find it difficult to build strong relationships, whether they're business or personal. It is important to always be in control of your non-verbal communication, and always be assertive.

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

- ◆ Watch your body posture – practice using an open, assertive body language and voice.
- ◆ Think before you speak. Take a few seconds to make sure you are conveying the right message, and in the way you want to convey it.
- ◆ Don't apologize if it's not warranted.
- ◆ Remember it is ok to say "no".

Article of the Week, 2009 – Communication Skills

- ◆ Remember everyone is entitled to an opinion, and don't try to convince others that yours is the "right" one. Also know that you don't have to apologize or make excuses.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- ◆ Be patient -- learning new behaviors takes time, and it will feel awkward at first.
- ◆ Practice leads to improvement.
- ◆ Expect some resistance from others.
- ◆ Becoming assertive may never feel as comfortable as being passive or aggressive, if that's our learned style, but the rewards are worth the effort.
- ◆ Recognize and validate yourself for improvement

5) The Meaning of your Communication and Its Effect

In communicating with other people, what matters more: what we intend to convey, or the actual response we get? Who is responsible for your communication? The meaning of our communication is not what we think it means. It is based on the response we get from the other person. It is pointless to insist on a meaning that is lost on the listener, especially when the response you get is entirely separate from your intent.

For example, we might *intend* to pay someone a compliment, and if they take it the wrong way, what can we do about that? Would it make sense to argue that they should just take it as a compliment and chill out? Perhaps a better approach is to notice that for *them* to receive it, compliments must be delivered differently.

Choice Is Better Than No Choice

If we become conscious of how we produce responses in other people, we will have additional choices. If we're triggering an unintended response, understand how it happens. The trigger may be as subtle as tone of voice or a certain facial expression; these non-verbal cues say more than our words. If the relationship is important, let the other person know you want to understand what they are getting from you.

going on for quite some time. They are both to the point where they try to avoid each other — a useful coping strategy, but not likely to resolve the conflict.

For example, a client of mine, call her Kathy, found herself repeatedly in a conflict with a coworker. She speaks and acts in ways that trigger the other person to get instantly upset and frustrated. This pattern has been

To start, I suggested that she discover what *she* does (or doesn't do) that leads to these strong reactions. My suggestion doesn't imply that she is doing anything wrong. It's only about the response she gets: use it as feedback. Once she owns how she influences the interactions, she can decide to either continue doing the same thing (and hope that the coworker or the circumstances change), or she can try something different.

I Said, She Said

Currently, Kathy's pattern is an automatic "calibrated loop"— similar to how "dysfunction" patterns get set up in family systems — you say this, and they say that, and you say... and the next thing you know nobody is listening and there's that all-too-familiar feeling again. So, what we can do is remember our goal, and

look for alternative ways to get there. Does it make sense to wait for *them* to change, to act more cooperatively, to notice how inappropriately they are behaving?

Famous definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over and

expecting a different result.

Sharing Power in Communication

Communication, like driving in traffic, is a cooperative system. Kathy can produce an instant reaction in the other person with just a glance. Isn't it amazing that we have such power to influence others?

situation will generally have the most control over that situation. How flexible are you? If there's a behavior you cannot generate — for whatever reason — there's probably a response you won't be able to elicit from that other person. And if the meaning of your communication is the response you get, that behavior might be exactly the one you need to produce.

Contrary to what you might expect, the person who has the most *flexibility* in a communication

Try Anything Else

If you're having a tough time influencing someone in the direction you want to go, trying flexing over to their world and first "meet them where they are" (see previous article). If you're producing an unintended result, remember your goal, and then get some feedback about how you are getting that result. With that feedback, you can plan out different ways to move with the other person toward your desired outcome.

There's a saying: when what you're doing isn't working, try anything else. When you maintain a state of curiosity, you can try doing something — anything — different, perceive the response, and learn from it. Did you move toward your goal? Ask for feedback. Keep experimenting.

6) Effective Praise, Effective Criticism

No one likes to be criticized. Even if the intent is well-meaning, criticism is taken as a personal offense. When it is, it shuts the door to further communication.

Few people have learned how to deliver artful criticism. Parents, CEOs and the leaders of nations are all guilty of employing the wrong methods to move people to do what they want by delivering blatant criticism. Charles Schwab, well-known steel magnate of United States

Steel Corp. and Bethlehem Steel said, "I have yet to meet the man, however great or exalted his station, who did not do better work and put forth greater effort under a spirit of approval than he would ever do under a spirit of criticism."

The art of using criticism effectively is never taught in schools though it should be. There are correct methods that effective leaders employ to insure action is taken and trust is established in the one who receives it.

Leave out the Emotions

For some people, criticism is an ego trip, just a way to prove superiority over another. Parents are often guilty in using criticism as a way to vent out their frustration and anger toward

their children. Whether it's an ego trip or fueled by anger, criticism is never effective if it is delivered with negative emotions.

Emphasize Ability

Everyone learns by making mistakes. The best way to correct mistakes is by finding something to praise before criticism is given. Showing faith and confidence in the abilities and talents

of the one being criticized establishes the groundwork for effective communication. People will be more willing to listen once they know the intention is to be helpful.

Build a Foundation of Trust

Building a foundation of trust should occur months before anyone is called to the carpet. Praise works for employees and children equally. The top leaders of any corporation dish out praise and appreciation regularly

and publicly. Genuine praise is not flattery. The employee is more willing to listen to advice when he knows his employer has faith in his abilities.

Deliver it in the Form of Advice

Advice and suggestion given the right way can help the offense seem easy and simple to correct. The one in charge should provide some

examples of similar mistakes he or she made and were resolved. Mistakes are never permanent. But when it is given, it should also

emphasize the need for some kind of action from the recipient of the

advice.

Let Them Talk it Out

There may be a good reason why an employee does not do as he is expected. Rather than launch into a tirade, take the time to listen to their reasons. Don't interrupt or try to find fault when they talk about it. They

must know that there is rapport and a willingness to understand them. Letting them talk often helps them see their own mistake and they will be more than willing to correct it.

When All Else Fails, Give a Warning

A calm approach works well in many cases. But sometimes an irate employee refuses to listen or act once advice is given. In such a case authority and a stern approach is required. That doesn't mean shouting back when they shout. Listening is still a requirement as it can diffuse a heated tirade to where the warning can be delivered. Agreeing on some points helps deflect potential arguments. Once peace has been established, a stern warning for change should be delivered along

with a deadline. It should be made plain that appropriate action will be taken if there is no change.

Constructive criticism is an art. Emotion and not logic is what stirs up anger and resentment. Knowing how to handle every situation with tact and diplomacy is what makes a better leader, better able to inspire trust and ensure that everyone will stay loyal and focused on the company goals without strife for many years to come.

7) Oral Presentation Skills

Effective Oral Presentation Skills

There is a myth that great speakers are born, not made. This is based on the misconception that somehow certain individuals have the innate ability to stand in front of an audience with no anxiety and give a moving, dynamic speech. The truth is, however, that

great speakers generally spend years developing and practicing their art of communication. All great speakers had to learn the basics of organization, preparation, delivery and dealing with anxiety. In order to do anything well, it takes constant practice and a mastery of the basics. Speaking is no different.

One of the most important techniques you can apply to become a more

confident and effective speaker is to reduce anxiety.

If implemented, the following tips could help reduce your anxiety before your next presentation:

- ◆ Organize – Focus on your presentation.
- ◆ Visualize – Mentally rehearse a perfect presentation with questions and answers.
- ◆ Practice – Standing up, out loud, using visual aids. Obtain feedback from others.
- ◆ Breathe – Sit up or stand erect, not relaxed. Inhale deeply a number of times.
- ◆ Focus on Relaxing!
- ◆ Release Tension – Try isometric exercises. Tighten and release your muscles. Start with toes and end with fists.
- ◆ Move – Flex your muscles – don't lock! Use a cordless microphone.
- ◆ Eye Contact with the Audience – Think one on one. Connect with the audience and make yourself personable. Use the feedback and energy you receive from your audience.

Planning your presentation is another component to becoming an effective speaker and presenter. There are essentially two steps that should be followed prior to delivering a presentation: 1) develop your objectives and 2) analyze your audience. In preparation, one must

identify the values, needs and constraints of the attendees and the level of knowledge of the audience.

For example, do not use slang, jargon, acronyms, or technical terms without explanation. It should also be determined in advance “what will work” and “what won't work”. In

Article of the Week, 2009 – Communication Skills

other words, what will gain you the most favorable reaction? In order to ascertain these items in advance, you should put yourself in the shoes of the people who will be listening to your presentation.

The next phase towards improving your effective oral presentation skills is organizing your thoughts.

There are a number of steps to this process:

1. Brainstorm main ideas. Use index cards or post it notes and only use one idea per card.
2. State the sub points. Ideally there should be between 2-5 sub points in your presentation. Be specific using explanations, data and evidence to back up your points.
3. State the benefits. Specifically state the benefits before and at the end of the body of your presentation.
4. Develop handouts. Handouts should reinforce important points, summarize action items and include supporting data.
5. Develop visual aids (PowerPoint slides, charts and graphs). Visual aids should be used to focus the attention of your audience, reinforce the verbal message and to stimulate interest. Keep in mind that effective presentations are people-centered, not media-centered. Too many presentations rely on the media to carry the message. While the media can certainly help, it's your interaction and rapport with the audience that makes the difference between an effective or ineffective presentation.
6. Main idea preview/review sentence (i.e. Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them).
7. Develop the introduction. Get the audience to focus their attention on you, provide background information and introduce yourself – who you are and why you're qualified.
8. Develop the conclusion. Your conclusion should be persuasive like a "call to action". Spell out what specifically they need to do, when and how.

The delivery of your presentation is another key to a successful presentation. An effective presentation should be delivered in the following sequence:

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Preview Sentence
- ◆ Main Ideas and Sub Ideas
- ◆ Benefits
- ◆ Review Sentence

◆ Conclusion

In order to come across to your audience as confident and persuasive, you should consider the way you physically deliver your points to your audience. The following are some helpful tips to help you achieve a level of confidence in delivering your presentation:

- ◆ Posture – Stand up straight, but avoid being stiff. Do not shift your weight from side to side.
- ◆ Movement – Keep yourself at least 4-8 feet from the front row – don't pace!
- ◆ Gestures – Your presentation should be a form of animated conversation. Avoid keeping your hands in your pockets or on your hips, crossing your arms or wringing your hands.
- ◆ Eye Contact – Do not look at the back of the room or over their heads. Maintain good eye contact to build rapport, trust and confidence.
- ◆ Using your Voice – Avoid being monotone which is generally caused by anxiety. Also avoid talking too fast. When people are nervous, they sometimes trip on their words. Be cognizant of your volume. Make sure that everyone can hear you.

At the conclusion of a presentation, there is generally a question and answer session that should be prepared for in advance. To prepare for this last hurdle, you should anticipate the questions that you could potentially be asked ahead of time. The key is to prepare for the worst and rehearse your responses to such questions. The more you prepare your answers the better versed and confident you will be. One tip you might employ during the question and answer session is to repeat the question being asked. This will give you some additional time to prepare your response. In general, we think

five times faster than we speak! Whatever you do, it is important that you maintain your style. If you don't know the answer to the question you are being asked, be honest and say that you don't know but that you will find out. Remember to really listen to the questions, do not interrupt and make sure that you stay focused on the individual asking the question. Finally, don't forget to thank your audience for all of their excellent questions.

If you employ these techniques, you will be on your way to becoming a more effective speaker and delivering successful presentations

8) The Magic of Dialogue

Meeting management tends to be a set of skills often overlooked by leaders and managers. The following information is a rather "Cadillac" version of meeting management suggestions. The reader might pick which suggestions best fits the particular culture of their own organization. Keep in mind that meetings are very expensive activities when one considers the cost of labor for the meeting and how much can or cannot get done in them. So take meeting management very seriously.

The process used in a meeting depends on the kind of meeting you

plan to have, e.g., staff meeting, planning meeting, problem solving meeting, etc. However, there are certain basics that are common to various types of meetings. These basics are described below.

(Note that there may seem to be a lot of suggestions listed below for something as apparently simple as having a meeting. However, any important activity would include a long list of suggestions. The list seems to become much smaller once you master how to conduct the activity.)

Selecting Participants

- ◆ The decision about who is to attend depends on what you want to accomplish in the meeting. This may seem too obvious to state, but it's surprising how many meetings occur without the right people there.
- ◆ Don't depend on your own judgment about who should come. Ask several other people for their opinion as well.
- ◆ If possible, call each person to tell them about the meeting, it's overall purpose and why their attendance is important.
- ◆ Follow-up your call with a meeting notice, including the purpose of the meeting, where it will be held and when, the list of participants and whom to contact if they have questions.
- ◆ Send out a copy of the proposed agenda along with the meeting notice.
- ◆ Have someone designated to record important actions, assignments and due dates during the meeting. This person should ensure that this information is distributed to all participants shortly after the meeting.

Developing Agendas

- ◆ Develop the agenda together with key participants in the meeting. Think of what overall outcome you want from the meeting and what activities need to occur to reach that outcome. The agenda should be organized so that these activities are conducted during the meeting.

Article of the Week, 2009 – Communication Skills

- ◆ In the agenda, state the overall outcome that you want from the meeting
- ◆ Design the agenda so that participants get involved early by having something for them to do right away and so they come on time.
- ◆ Next to each major topic, include the type of action needed, the type of output expected (decision, vote, action assigned to someone), and time estimates for addressing each topic.
- ◆ Ask participants if they'll commit to the agenda.
- ◆ Keep the agenda posted at all times.
- ◆ Don't overly design meetings; be willing to adapt the meeting agenda if members are making progress in the planning process.
- ◆ Think about how you label an event, so people come in with that mindset; it may pay to have a short dialogue around the label to develop a common mindset among attendees, particularly if they include representatives from various cultures.

Opening Meetings

- ◆ Always start on time; this respects those who showed up on time and reminds late-comers that the scheduling is serious.
- ◆ Welcome attendees and thank them for their time.
- ◆ Review the agenda at the beginning of each meeting, giving participants a chance to understand all proposed major topics, change them and accept them.
- ◆ Note that a meeting recorder if used will take minutes and provide them back to each participant shortly after the meeting.
- ◆ Model the kind of energy and participant needed by meeting participants.
- ◆ Clarify your role(s) in the meeting.

Establishing Ground Rules for Meetings

You don't need to develop new ground rules each time you have a meeting, surely. However, it pays to have a few basic ground rules that can be used for most of your meetings. These ground rules cultivate the basic ingredients needed for a successful meeting.

Article of the Week, 2009 – Communication Skills

- ◆ Four powerful ground rules are: participate, get focus, maintain momentum and reach closure. (You may want a ground rule about confidentiality.)
- ◆ List your primary ground rules on the agenda. If you have new attendees who are not used to your meetings, you might review *each* ground rule.
- ◆ Keep the ground rules posted at all times.

Time Management

- ◆ One of the most difficult facilitation tasks is time management -- time seems to run out before tasks are completed. Therefore, the biggest challenge is keeping momentum to keep the process moving.
- ◆ You might ask attendees to help you keep track of the time.
- ◆ If the planned time on the agenda is getting out of hand, present it to the group and ask for their input as to a resolution.

Evaluations of Meeting Process

- ◆ It's amazing how often people will complain about a meeting being a complete waste of time -- but they only say so after the meeting. Get their feedback during the meeting when you can improve the meeting process right away. Evaluating a meeting only at the end of the meeting is usually too late to do anything about participants' feedback.
- ◆ Every couple of hours, conduct 5-10 minutes "satisfaction checks".
- ◆ In a round-table approach, quickly have each participant indicate how they think the meeting is going.

Evaluating the Overall Meeting

- ◆ Leave 5-10 minutes at the end of the meeting to evaluate the meeting; don't skip this portion of the meeting.
- ◆ Have each member rank the meeting from 1-5, with 5 as the highest, and have each member explain their ranking
- ◆ Have the chief executive rank the meeting last.

Closing Meetings

- ◆ Always end meetings on time and attempt to end on a positive note.

- At the end of a meeting, review actions and assignments, and set the time for the next meeting and ask each person if they can make it or not (to get their commitment)
- Clarify that meeting minutes and/or actions will be reported back to members in at most a week (this helps to keep momentum going).

Meetings are one of the most vital elements of any business, so getting the most out of meetings is of great value. So many people quote boring, unproductive meetings as being a 'waste of time', that some sense of it all is needed.

Managing meetings effectively will help you make the best use of yours and everyone else's time, whilst acknowledging the tremendous value of utilising those real opportunities where people get together in a generative, growth focused way.

Simple Actions You Can Take Today!

1. Consider the meetings you took part in during the last week. Being really honest, how productive were they on a scale of 1 to 10. What would a meeting with a score of 3 better have been like?
2. What can you do in preparation of the next meeting you are involved in to make it work better? Come on, get up and be the source of change!
3. Consider the behaviours in the meetings you are part of. How do you personally behave? Compare your contribution to others present. What can you do differently and how will you get this embedded deeply.
4. In your next meeting, observe carefully where things start to go wrong - if they do. Where does the responsibility for the meeting lie on this occasion?
5. Who gets involved in your meetings - and who doesn't? Be really focused about the value each gets from being there. Be prepared to exclude others - and be careful and generous with how you let people down.
6. What outcome would be the best possible from the meetings you go to, to really make a difference? What need for movement and progress is everyone aware of?
7. Would you benefit from more or less meetings next week? Consider what you could do with the extra time. How do you balance the added extra time with the loss of meeting value.
8. Ensure that everyone is clear of what is expected of them and by when, as they leave the meeting. Get minutes out as soon as you can to ensure everyone is really clear.
9. How do you park issues that come up that are not relevant to the meeting? What is the process for acknowledging the real issues people face - but at some other time please.

Article of the Week, 2009 – Communication Skills

10. Review each meeting you go to and look deeply at what went well, and what might have gone better - what can you change yourself to make things run more effectively?

9) DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE AT WORK

Difficult people do unfortunately exist at work as in every other walk of life. It is rare to find a workplace without them. Depending on your level of self-esteem, dealing with a difficult person at work can be debilitating and stressful. Dealing with a 'difficult' person is easier when the person is generally obnoxious or when the

behavior affects more than one person, as you have safety in the knowledge that it is not a personal attack. It is a much more complex scenario dealing with a difficult person when they are attacking you or undermining your professional contribution and dealing with them is dependant on your self confidence and your professional courage.

DIFFICULT PEOPLE COME IN VARIOUS GUISES

Some talk constantly and rarely, if ever, listen. Others must always have the last word. Some co-workers fail to keep commitments which impacts upon others and can cause friction. Others may criticize anything that they did not create. Difficult co-workers compete with you for power and privilege; some go too far in encouraging and creating a positive opinion for the boss – to your

diminishment. Difficult people and situations exist in all work places, in many different guises, they do however, all have one thing in common, in that they or the situation must be addressed. Regardless of the type of difficult situation in which you find yourself, **dealing with difficult people or situations is a must.**

DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULT CO-WORKER

I've experienced workplaces in which all sorts of dysfunctional approaches to dealing with a difficult co-worker have been tried. Putting an anonymous note in the person's mailbox is not an option. Placing a can of deodorant on a hygiene challenged co-worker's desk is not a productive option either. Confronting the bully publicly can often lead to

disaster. Putting dead bugs in his desk drawer can leave your boss no option other than to fire you. So, let's look at more productive ways to address your difficult co-worker. Are you convinced that in almost all cases you need to productively deal with your difficult co-worker?

Here are 5 ways of dealing with that difficult person at work:

1. Always begin by examining yourself in determining whether the object of your attention, i.e. the difficult person or situation, really is the result of their action.

Could you be over-reacting to that difficult person? Are you being overly sensitive to remarks? Have you got previous experience of similar people? or, have you always experienced difficulty with the same type of person or situation? Is there a

pattern in your history interaction with co-workers, i.e. do you generally get on well with all? Do you recognize that you have 'hot buttons' that are easily pushed, thus causing reaction?

2. Discuss your situation with a trusted friend or ideally, a colleague.

Consider various ways of addressing the situation (or person). When you are the object of an attack, or your boss appears to support the dysfunctional actions of a co-worker, it is often difficult to objectively assess your options. Anger, pain, humiliation, fear and concern about making the situation worse are legitimate emotions.

Pay attention to the unspoken agreement you create when you solicit another's assistance. You are committing to act unless you agree actions will only hurt the situation. Otherwise, you risk becoming a whiner or complainer in the eyes of your colleague.

3. Approach the person with whom you are having the problem for a private discussion.

Talk to them about what you are experiencing in "I" messages. (Using "I" messages is a communication approach that focuses on your experience of the situation rather than on attacking or accusing the other person.) You can also explain to your co-worker the impact of their actions on you. Be pleasant and agreeable as you talk with the other person. They may not be aware of the impact of their words or actions on you. They

may be learning about their impact on you for the first time. Or, they may have to consider and confront a pattern in their own interaction with people. Worst case? They may know their impact on you and deny it or try to explain it away. Unfortunately, some difficult people just don't care. During the discussion, attempt to reach agreement about positive and supportive actions going forward.

4. Follow up after the initial discussion. Has the behavior changed? Gotten better? Or worse?

Determine whether a follow-up discussion is needed. Determine whether a follow-up discussion will have any impact. Decide if you want to continue to confront the difficult person by yourself. Become a peacemaker. (Decide how badly you want to make peace with the other

person and how much you want your current job. Determine whether you have experienced a pattern of support from your boss.) If you answer, "yes," to these questions, hold another discussion. If not, escalate and move to the next idea.

5. You can confront your difficult co-worker's behaviour publicly.

Deal with the person with gentle humour or slight sarcasm. Or, make an exaggerated physical gesture – no, not that one – such as a salute or place your hand over your heart to indicate a serious wounding. You can also tell the difficult person that you'd like them to consider important history in their decision making or similar words expressed positively, depending on the subject. Direct

confrontation does work well for some people in some situations. I don't think it works to ask the person to stop doing what they're doing, publicly, but you can employ more positive confrontational tactics. Their success for you will depend on your ability to pull them off. Each of us is not spur-of-the-moment funny, but if you are, you can use the humor well with difficult co-workers.

To deal with the problem think first why people act the way they do:

1. They may be frustrated in many ways for reasons not connected with you. What you hear is the expression of that frustration. They may be nice people underneath.
2. They may be anxious. Even using the telephone causes some people anxiety.
3. Do not take what people say to you as a personal insult. They are not attacking you but may have become very frustrated with a situation they cannot control and as a result the quality of their normal communication takes a severe dip. Do not allow yourself to take offence – difficult as that often is.
4. Do not lose your temper. If both you and your customer end up in a shouting match (or worse) you are unlikely to solve anything – and after all that is your objective.
5. Keep your attention on the facts relating to your meeting. Try to minimize emotional reactions.
6. Think before you speak. Create time for yourself before you answer via a deep breath, a thoughtful expression, etc.

HOW TO DEAL WITH COMPLAINTS

Complaints tend to fall into two groups - the justified and the unjustified. Remember, until you know the facts you will not know which one you are dealing with.

Action Tips

- ◆ Take a deep breath.
- ◆ Keep your voice enthusiastic and friendly.
- ◆ Listen to what is being said, take notes.
- ◆ Do not interrupt
- ◆ Get the speaker's name and telephone number.
- ◆ Get the order number so the complaint can be checked.
- ◆ Sympathise without being disloyal.
- ◆ If the company is at fault, apologies.
- ◆ Never give excuses (the truth is always the preferred option here)
- ◆ If you promise something (e.g. to call back) - do it. Remember - in times of stress a promise is sacred.

Never say or do the following:

- ◆ You are through to the wrong department.
- ◆ It's not my fault.
- ◆ I didn't deal with this.
- ◆ Will you write in (a solution is needed now. Delay will just make the situation worse).
- ◆ We are having lots of problems you're actually the sixth one today about that.
- ◆ Interrupt - they will start all over again.
- ◆ Automatically accept liability.
- ◆ Jump to conclusions.
- ◆ Talk down to them or accuse of them automatically of misuse or making a silly mistake.
- ◆ Lose your temper.
- ◆ Appeal for sympathy.

AGGRESSION

Aggression is a symptom of both anxiety and frustration. It is a by product of insecurity. Do not confuse it with assertion.

Action Tips

- ◆ Take a deep breath.
- ◆ Speak calmly at an even pitch.
- ◆ Keep your temper.
- ◆ Do not respond with aggression.
- ◆ Ask, and keep asking, for the facts.
- ◆ Say something like, "I know this is a problem for you but I can only help if you will let me" (an empathetic assertion).
- ◆ Encourage the talker to talk out their feelings of aggression (the longer they talk the less aggressive they will become).
- ◆ If you cannot calm the individual arrange for a break (e.g. tell a telephone caller you will ring back. Tell a personal caller you are going to fetch a document, look up a reference number etc).

VAGUENESS

Vague customers will go on for a long time and say very little. Be patient and try to bring them back to the issue.

Action Tips

- ◆ Maintain your patience and good humour.
- ◆ Write down the facts as you hear them.
- ◆ Use the facts to bring the customer back to the point.
- ◆ Keep a smile in your voice.
- ◆ Be business-like.
- ◆ Don't be side-tracked.
- ◆ Keep to the point yourself.
- ◆ Don't lose your temper.
- ◆ Don't be abrupt
- ◆ Keep summarizing regularly.

UNFRIENDLINESS

Some individuals are not fond of people. Some people confuse being businesslike with unfriendliness. Don't take it personally.

Action Tips

- ◆ Smile as you speak.
- ◆ Keep your voice up and pleasant
- ◆ Deal with the matter as quickly as possible.
- ◆ Don't make personal remarks.
- ◆ Get to the facts and stay with them.
- ◆ Don't be sarcastic (e.g. Thank you for calling).

A PLAN FOR ACTION

Customer service is about constantly looking for ways to improve the way that our organization does business with its clients. This may involve improving your communication skills but more and more organizations look at their practices and processes and how they can improve them. One of the ways to do this is to examine current practice, create a vision for

the future and then develop models to address the gap between present and future. Our 'feedback and retention' checklist below allows your organization to start to question its current operations objectively. Use this in team meetings, management meetings, as the basis for a customer survey or simply as an ongoing checklist of best practice.

Customer Feedback and Retention

1. How does the organization obtain customer feedback?
2. If the feedback comes in the form of a phone call, who takes the phone call initially?
3. Does the call get transferred to the proper department?
4. If the complaint is about poor service, who handles it?
5. How is feedback given to the people responsible for the poor service?
6. Are managers trained in how to give negative feedback to their staff?
7. Who is responsible for evaluating customer feedback?
8. Does customer feedback result in changes?

Article of the Week, 2009 – Communication Skills

9. If so, are the changes brought to the customer's attention?
10. How long does it take for feedback to be processed?
11. Are there any examples of a customer complaint that changed the way we did things?

10) Importance of Communication Skills in Organizational Performance

Effective communication and managers' communication skills are an extremely important issue for effective organizational behavior.

Effective business must succeed in all its aspects in order to both correspond

- ◆ Internal communication - between management and employees
- ◆ External communication - between the company's staff and clients, suppliers, vendors

to the newest market trends, and satisfy customers' demands.

Therefore, among the most important and vital for any organization are:

The Importance of Effective Communication for Organizational Performance

Lack of effective communication may lead to:

- ◆ Misunderstandings
- ◆ Lack of information
- ◆ Decrease in employees' performance
- ◆ Decrease in company's turnover, as a result

Ineffective or poor communication is frustrating for employees, and becomes a source of a conflict. Managers' inability to clearly express their thoughts, ideas and demands leads to employees' inability to perform work well, according to the company's demands.

Such a situation may take place when an employee is not truly aware of what is requested of them. This decreases the satisfaction an employee gets from the job.

Benefits of Effective Communication in the Workplace

If a manager is able to communicate their ideas clearly, so that employees definitely know what is asked of them, the subordinates will, consequently, perform their jobs correspondingly. On contrast, an aggressive way of managing reports results in employees' getting more

and more frustrated, often guessing what their real faults were.

A good style of management, as well as a positive approach to communication, ensures that an employee and a supervisor

understand each other, and are more effective at the workplace.

Effective communication in the workplace provides employees with a clear understanding of what is demanded from them, with

knowledge of what to do and what to expect. For organizations, such a communication style creates effective performance of the staff, and, consequently, increases customer loyalty and profit.

Solutions

- ◆ A manager should make sure one's communication style is positive and effective.
- ◆ The employees, if they understand the situation correctly, should communicate the problem to the supervisor, or to the higher management in order for the company to take certain measures for solving the problem.
- ◆ Any problems can and should be communicated both among the employees and up to supervisors.
- ◆ The atmosphere inside the company should be encouraging for effective communication so that employees, thanks to their management, clearly realize how important communication is for each staff member personally, and to the company in general.
- ◆ It is very important for communication to be 'two way', as *Business Performance* outlines, – employees should not only listen, but always have a chance, and be encouraged to ask questions, discuss, express own ideas.
- ◆ Feedback mechanisms and sharing best practices internally should be an integral part of organizational performance, and performance management system in particular.

Career Support and Self Development

“If you wish to achieve worthwhile things in your personal and career life, you must become a worthwhile person in your own self-development.”

Brian Tracy

11) Life-After-Retirement: How to Enjoy Your New Lifestyle

There is no denying the fact that when you retire your lifestyle too changes. This does not in anyway mean that you will no longer lead a happy and contented life. Retirement can be beautiful if you plan it well. Unlike in years gone by, planning for life after retirement requires much more thought and

more money simply because our expectations are much higher today. The desire to lead a carefree lifestyle after retirement is certainly uppermost in the minds of most people.

Some priority areas you should consider are:

Health:

Your health should be your first major concern after retirement. How best you can maintain good health and remain active will determine the lifestyle you will be able to enjoy in the years to come. Proper diet and a

daily walk for about forty five minutes will keep you fit and healthy. Additionally joining a Senior Citizens Club and participating in their social activities and regular exercise programs will be helpful.

Part-Time Work or Voluntary Work:

Let us face the fact that all of us humans possess a certain amount of ego and pride and our jobs gave us the opportunity to display them. That has all disappeared now. This happens to everyone who retires from active service and this is what life is all about.

If you are fit and active and if you need an additional income, you can find a part-time job that you will be happy with. If you are unable to get one, the next best thing is to look for a voluntary job. Many organizations are manned by retired personnel whose work ethics are greatly valued and appreciated. Doing a voluntary job, helping people can be very satisfying and gives you the added satisfaction of continuing to be in the public eye even after retirement.

Instead of worrying, think of ways and means of adopting yourself to the changing circumstances.

Computer and the Internet:

Today the computer and the internet provide you with a wonderful opportunity to keep yourself occupied for several hours in your new lifestyle. This is indeed a blessing for many retirees who are knowledgeable about the use of the computer. News

from around the world, music, videos, complete novels are all right there at your finger tips. You could also be in touch with your kith and kin by e-mail. Those not conversant with the use of the computer can easily gain proficiency by attending

Article of the Week, 2009 – Career Support and Self Development

special classes conducted for senior citizens.

The computer and the internet also provide you with a great opportunity to earn an additional income while keeping yourself mentally active. Thus life after retirement can be financially remunerative too.

You can enroll yourself with online paid survey companies and participate in online surveys for which you will be remunerated.

Conclusion:

With better living standards and the improved quality of life, the present perception of life after retirement is not about age but more about the state

Participating in online auctions by enrolling yourself with e-Bay or other auction sites is another popular way of earning an additional income. An easy way of getting started is to sell your own items that you have discarded and stored away in the basement or attic.

Starting a Blog is another way of keeping yourself occupied and giving expression to your views and thoughts online while at the same time monetizing your Blog with Google Adsense and other affiliate programs.

of your mind. It is what you think you are. So dump your fears about age and retirement and start enjoying your new lifestyle.

12) Community of Practice: Learning as a Social System

You are a claims processor working for a large insurance company. You are good at what you do, but although you know where your paycheck comes from, the corporation mainly remains an abstraction for you. The group you actually work for is a relatively small community of people who share your working conditions. It is with this group that you learn the intricacies of your job, explore the meaning of your work, construct an image of the company, and develop a sense of yourself as a worker.

You are an engineer working on two projects within your business unit. These are demanding projects and you give them your best. You respect your teammates and are accountable to your project managers. But when you face a problem that stretches your knowledge, you turn to people like Jake, Sylvia, and Robert. Even though they work on their own projects in other business units, they are your real colleagues. You all go back many years. They understand the issues you face and will explore new ideas with you. And even Julie, who now works for one of your suppliers, is only a phone call away. These are the people with whom you can discuss the latest developments in the field and troubleshoot each other's most difficult design challenges. If only you had more time for these kinds of interactions.

You are a CEO and, of course, you are responsible for the company as a whole. You take care of the big picture. But you have to admit that

for you, too, the company is mostly an abstraction: names, numbers, processes, strategies, markets, spreadsheets. Sure, you occasionally take tours of the facilities, but on a day-to-day basis, you live among your peers—your direct reports with whom you interact in running the company, some board members, and other executives with whom you play golf and discuss a variety of issues.

We now recognize knowledge as a key source of competitive advantage in the business world, but we still have little understanding of how to create and leverage it in practice. Traditional knowledge management approaches attempt to capture existing knowledge within formal systems, such as databases. Yet systematically addressing the kind of dynamic "knowing" that makes a difference in practice requires the participation of people who are fully engaged in the process of creating, refining, communicating, and using knowledge.

We frequently say that people are an organization's most important resource. Yet we seldom understand this truism in terms of the communities through which individuals develop and share the capacity to create and use knowledge. Even when people work for large organizations, they learn through their participation in more specific communities made up of people with whom they interact on a regular basis. These "communities of practice" are

mostly informal and distinct from organizational units.

However, they are a company's most versatile and dynamic knowledge

resource and form the basis of an organization's ability to know and learn.

Defining Communities of Practice

Communities of practice are everywhere. We all belong to a number of them—at work, at school, at home, in our hobbies. Some have a name, some don't. We are core members of some and we belong to others more peripherally. You may be a member of a band, or you may just come to rehearsals to hang around with the group. You may lead a group of consultants who specialize in telecommunication strategies, or you may just stay in touch to keep informed about developments in the field. Or you may have just joined a community and are still trying to find your place in it. Whatever form our participation takes, most of us are

familiar with the experience of belonging to a community of practice.

Members of a community are informally bound by what they do together—from engaging in lunchtime discussions to solving difficult problems—and by what they have learned through their mutual engagement in these activities. A community of practice is thus different from a community of interest or a geographical community, neither of which implies a shared practice. A community of practice defines itself along three dimensions:

- ◆ **What it is about** – its *joint enterprise* as understood and continually renegotiated by its members
- ◆ **How it functions** *mutual engagement* that bind members together into a social entity
- ◆ **What capability it has produced** – the *shared repertoire* of communal resources (routines, sensibilities, artifacts, vocabulary, styles, etc.) that members have developed over time.

Communities of practice also move through various stages of development characterized by different levels of interaction among the members and different kinds of activities (see "Stages of Development").

Communities of practice develop around things that matter to people. As a result, their practices reflect the members' own understanding of what

is important. Obviously, outside constraints or directives can influence this understanding, but even then, members develop practices that are their own response to these external influences. Even when a community's actions conform to an external mandate, it is the community—not the mandate—that produces the practice. In this sense, communities of practice

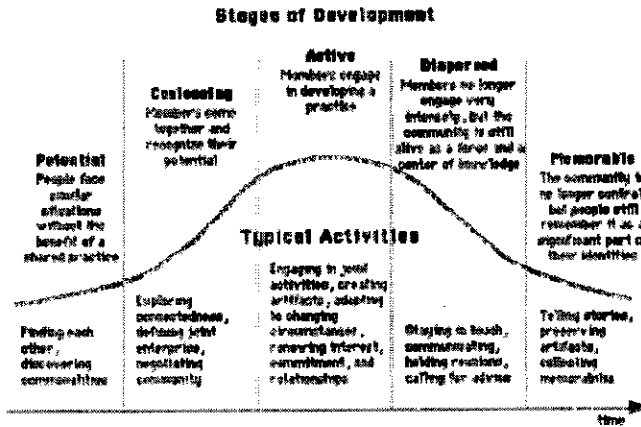
are fundamentally self-organizing systems.

Communities of Practice in Organizations

Communities of practice exist in any organization. Because membership is based on participation rather than on official status, these communities are

not bound by organizational affiliations; they can span institutional structures and hierarchies. They can be found:

- *Within businesses:* Communities of practice arise as people address recurring sets of problems together. So claims processors within an office form communities of practice to deal with the constant flow of information they need to process. By participating in such a communal memory, they can do the job without having to remember everything themselves.



- *Across business units:* Important knowledge is often distributed in different business units. People who work in cross-functional teams thus form communities of practice to keep in touch with their peers in various parts of the company and maintain their expertise. When communities of practice cut across business units, they can develop strategic perspectives that transcend the fragmentation of product lines. For instance, a community of practice may propose a plan for equipment purchase that no one business unit could have come up with on its own.
- *Across company boundaries:* In some cases, communities of practice become useful by crossing organizational boundaries. For instance, in fast-

moving industries, engineers who work for suppliers and buyers may form a community of practice to keep up with constant technological changes.

Communities of practice are not a new kind of organizational unit; rather, they are a different *cut* on the organization's structure—one that emphasizes the learning that people have done together rather than the unit they report to, the project they are working on, or the people they know. Communities of practice differ from other kinds of groups found in organizations in the way they define their enterprise, exist over time, and set their boundaries:

- ◆ A community of practice is different from a *business or functional unit* in that it defines itself in the doing, as members develop among themselves their own understanding of what their practice is about. This living process results in a much richer definition than a mere institutional charter. As a consequence, the boundaries of a community of practice are more flexible than those of an organizational unit. The membership involves whoever participates in and contributes to the practice. People can participate in different ways and to different degrees. This permeable periphery creates many opportunities for learning, as outsiders and newcomers learn the practice in concrete terms, and core members gain new insights from contacts with less-engaged participants.
- ◆ A community of practice is different from a *team* in that the shared learning and interest of its members are what keep it together. It is defined by knowledge rather than by task, and exists because participation has value to its members. A community of practice's life cycle is determined by the value it provides to its members, not by an institutional schedule. It does not appear the minute a project is started and does not disappear with the end of a task. It takes a while to come into being and may live long after a project is completed or an official team has disbanded.
- ◆ A community of practice is different from a *network* in the sense that it is "about" something; it is not just a set of relationships. It has an identity as a community, and thus shapes the identities of its members. A community of practice exists because it produces a shared practice as members engage in a collective process of learning.

People belong to communities of practice at the same time as they belong to other organizational structures. In their business units, they shape the organization. In their teams, they take care of projects. In their networks, they form relationships. And in their

communities of practice, they develop the knowledge that lets them do these other tasks. This informal fabric of communities and shared practices makes the official organization effective and, indeed, possible.

Communities of practice have different relationships with the official organization. The table "Relationships to Official Organization" shows different degrees of institutional involvement, but it does not imply that some relations are better or more advanced

than others. Rather, these distinctions are useful because they draw attention to the different issues that can arise based on the kind of interaction between the community of practice and the organization as a whole.

Relationships to Official Organization

Relationship	Definition	Challenges typical of the relationship
<i>Unrecognized</i>	Invisible to the organization and sometimes even to members themselves	Lack of reflexivity, awareness of value and of limitation
<i>Bootlegged</i>	Only visible informally to a circle of people in the know	Getting resources, having an impact, keeping hidden
<i>Legitimized</i>	Officially sanctioned as a valuable entity	Scrutiny, over-management, new demands
<i>Strategic</i>	Widely recognized as central to the organization's success	Short-term pressures, blindness of success, smugness, elitism, exclusion
<i>Transformative</i>	Capable of redefining its environment and the direction of the organization	Relating to the rest of the organization, acceptance, managing boundaries

Importance of Communities to Organizations

Communities of practice are important to the functioning of any organization, but they become crucial to those that recognize knowledge as a key asset. From this perspective, an effective organization comprises a constellation of interconnected communities of practice, each dealing with specific aspects of the company's competency—from the

peculiarities of a long-standing client, to manufacturing safety, to esoteric technical inventions. Knowledge is created, shared, organized, revised, and passed on within and among these communities. In a deep sense, it is by these communities that knowledge is "owned" in practice.

Communities of practice fulfill a number of functions with respect to the creation, accumulation, and

diffusion of knowledge in an organization:

- ◆ They are nodes for the *exchange and interpretation of information*. Because members have a shared understanding, they know what is relevant to communicate and how to present information in useful ways. As a consequence, a community of practice that spreads throughout an organization is an ideal channel for moving information, such as best practices, tips, or feedback, across organizational boundaries.
- ◆ They can *retain knowledge* in "living" ways, unlike a database or a manual. Even when they routinize certain tasks and processes, they can do so in a manner that responds to local circumstances and thus is useful to practitioners. Communities of practice preserve the tacit aspects of knowledge that formal systems cannot capture. For this reason, they are ideal for initiating newcomers into a practice.
- ◆ They can *steward competencies* to keep the organization at the cutting edge. Members of these groups discuss novel ideas, work together on problems, and keep up with developments inside and outside a firm. When a community commits to being on the forefront of a field, members distribute responsibility for keeping up with or pushing new developments. This collaborative inquiry makes membership valuable, because people invest their professional identities in being part of a dynamic, forward-looking community.
- ◆ They provide *homes for identities*. They are not as temporary as teams, and unlike business units, they are organized around what matters to their members. Identity is important because, in a sea of information, it helps us sort out what we pay attention to, what we participate in, and what we stay away from. Having a sense of identity is a crucial aspect of learning in organizations. Consider the annual computer drop at a semiconductor company that designs both analog and digital circuits. The computer drop became a ritual by which the analog community asserted its identity. Once a year, their hero would climb the highest building on the company's campus and drop a computer, to the great satisfaction of his peers in the analog gang. The corporate world is full of these displays of identity, which manifest themselves in the jargon people use, the clothes they wear, and the remarks they make. If companies want to benefit from people's creativity, they must support communities as a way to help them develop their identities.

Communities of practice structure an organization's learning potential in two ways: through the knowledge they develop at their *core* and through interactions at their *boundaries*. Like any asset, these

communities can become liabilities if their own expertise becomes insular. It is therefore important to pay as much attention to the boundaries of communities of practice as to their core, and to make sure that there is

enough activity at these boundaries to renew learning. For while the core is the center of expertise, radically new insights often arise at the boundary between communities. Communities of practice truly become organizational assets when their core and their boundaries are active in complementary ways.

To develop the capacity to create and retain knowledge, organizations must understand the processes by which these learning communities evolve and interact. We need to build organizational and technological infrastructures that do not dismiss or impede these processes, but rather recognize, support, and leverage them.

Developing and nurturing Communities of Practice

Just because communities of practice arise naturally does not mean that organizations can't do anything to influence their development. Most communities of practice exist whether or not the organization recognizes them. Many are best left alone—some might actually wither under the institutional spotlight. And some may actually need to be carefully seeded and nurtured. But a good number will benefit from some attention, as long as this attention does not smother their self-organizing drive.

Whether these communities arise spontaneously or come together through seeding and nurturing, their development ultimately depends on internal leadership. Certainly, in order to legitimize the community as a place for sharing and creating knowledge, recognized experts need to be involved in some way, even if they don't do much of the work. But internal leadership is more diverse and distributed. It can take many forms:

- ◆ The *inspirational* leadership provided by thought leaders and recognized experts
- ◆ The *day-to-day* leadership provided by those who organize activities
- ◆ The *classificatory* leadership provided by those who collect and organize information in order to document practices
- ◆ The *interpersonal* leadership provided by those who weave the community's social fabric
- ◆ The *boundary* leadership provided by those who connect the community to other communities
- ◆ The *institutional* leadership provided by those who maintain links with other organizational constituencies, in particular the official hierarchy
- ◆ The *cutting-edge* leadership provided by those who shepherd "out-of-the-box" initiatives.

These roles may be formal or informal, and may be concentrated in a core group or more widely distributed. But in all cases,

leadership must have intrinsic legitimacy in the community. To be effective, therefore, managers and others must work with communities

of practice from the *inside* rather than merely attempt to design them or manipulate them from the *outside*.

Nurturing communities of practice in organizations includes:

Legitimizing participation.

Organizations can support communities of practice by recognizing the work of sustaining them; by giving members the time to participate in activities; and by creating an environment in which the value communities bring is acknowledged. To this end, it is important to have an institutional discourse that includes this less-

recognized dimension of organizational life. Merely introducing the term "communities of practice" into an organization's vocabulary can have a positive effect by giving people an opportunity to talk about how their participation in these groups contributes to the organization as a whole.

Negotiating their strategic context

In what Richard McDermott calls "double-knit organizations," people work in teams for projects but belong to longer-lived communities of practice for maintaining their expertise. The value of team-based projects that deliver tangible products is easily recognized, but it is also easy to overlook the potential cost of their short-term focus. The learning that communities of practice share is just as critical, but its longer-term value is more subtle to appreciate. Organizations must therefore develop

a clear sense of how knowledge is linked to business strategies and use this understanding to help communities of practice articulate their strategic value. This involves a process of negotiation that goes both ways. It includes understanding what knowledge—and therefore what practices—a given strategy requires. Conversely, it also includes paying attention to what emergent communities of practice indicate with regard to potential strategic directions.

Being attuned to real practices.

To be successful, organizations must leverage existing practices. For instance, when the customer service function of a large corporation decided to combine service, sales, and repairs under the same 800 number, researchers from the Institute

for Research on Learning discovered that people were already learning from each other on the job while answering phone calls. They then instituted a learning strategy for combining the three functions that took advantage of this existing

practice. By leveraging what they were already doing, workers achieved competency in the three areas much faster than they would have through traditional training. More generally, the knowledge that companies need is

usually already present in some form, and the best place to start is to foster the formation of communities of practice that leverage the potential that already exists.

Fine-tuning the organization.

Many elements in an organizational environment can foster or inhibit communities of practice, including management interest, reward systems, work processes, corporate culture, and company policies. These factors rarely determine whether people form communities of practice, but they can facilitate or hinder participation. For example, issues of compensation and recognition often come up. Because communities of practice must be self-organizing to learn effectively and because participation must be intrinsically self-sustaining, it is tricky to use reward systems as a way

to manipulate behavior or micro-manage the community. But organizations shouldn't ignore the issue of reward and recognition altogether; rather, they need to adapt reward systems to support participation in learning communities, for instance, by including community activities and leadership in performance review discussions. Managers also need to make sure that existing compensation systems do not inadvertently penalize the work involved in building communities.

Providing support

Communities of practice are mostly self-sufficient, but they can benefit from some resources, such as outside experts, travel, meeting facilities, and communications technology. A

companywide team assigned to nurture community development can help address these needs. This team typically

- ◆ provides *guidance and resources* when needed
- ◆ helps communities connect their agenda to business *strategies*
- ◆ encourages them to move forward with their agenda and remain focused on the *cutting edge*
- ◆ makes sure they include all *the right people*
- ◆ helps them create *links* to other communities

Such a team can also help identify and eliminate barriers to participation in the structure or culture of the overall organization; for instance, conflicts between short-term demands on people's time and the need to

participate in learning communities. In addition, just the existence of such a team sends the message that the organization values the work and initiative of communities of practice.

The Art of Balancing Design and Emergence

Communities of practice do not usually require heavy institutional infrastructures, but their members do need time and space to collaborate. They do not require much management, but they can use leadership. They self-organize, but they flourish when their learning fits with their organizational environment. The art is to help such communities find resources and connections without overwhelming them with organizational meddling. This need for balance reflects the following paradox: No community can fully design the learning of another; but conversely no community can fully design its own learning.

13) **Becoming a Sage: The Keys to Life-long Self - Development**

People define success differently. For some, success means having achieved financial security or career pinnacles. Some people judge their success by the positive impact they have made on others whether these are clients, students, associates, or family. Other

successful people have acquired a level of expertise that is recognized and respected by peers. But despite these differing definitions of what constitutes success, successful people themselves have similar characteristics.

- First, they are self-confident without being arrogant. This comes from being self-aware: knowing one's strengths and weaknesses, knowing one's goals and remaining true to one's values and capabilities.
- Second, they are willing to grow by challenging their limits of knowledge and experience.
- And third, they are willing to reflect and learn from experience.

Webster's Dictionary defines a "sage" as one who is wise through reflection and experience. In ancient cultures, a group's sages were those who had experienced rich lives and were thoughtful about what they had learned through these experiences.

late 1980s found that successful executives were those who had benefited from the "lessons of experience."

In contemporary times, groundbreaking research by the Center for Creative Leadership in the

So from these common traits of successful people, those striving for success can seek to practice three fundamental steps to self-development.

Self-development Step: Know Thyself

This is the most basic tenet of psychology, self-improvement, and emotional intelligence. If you think you need to get to know yourself better, try these basics.

- ♦ **Solicit Feedback Regularly:** Perception is reality. Seek to understand how people perceive you. You may not be achieving the impact you expected in leading or working with others. You can not adjust your approach without the benefit of feedback that can inform you in terms of how your intentions were received by others. Be proactive in finding out what people think about you and your style of interacting and your approach. Be open to and appreciative of the feedback you receive, not defensive. Seek to understand rather than to be understood.
- ♦ **Reflect on Performance:** Some successful people are gregarious and extroverted while others are reserved and introverted. But all successful people

know how to spend time alone being reflective and thoughtful about recent performance and behavior. Take time every day to reflect on the day's work and interactions.

Always take ample time at the conclusion of major elements of work to reflect on the quality of what you produced and the effectiveness of your work with others. The key to reflecting on performance is remaining balanced in your self-assessment. Be self-critical: understand what you could have done better and learn from these mistakes. But also acknowledge success whenever warranted: celebrate and take pride in what you have done well.

- ◆ **Know Your Strengths and Weaknesses:** As you collect feedback and reflections, come to understand your personal strengths and weaknesses. Know that everyone has both. Successful people build success from their strengths while they limit the negative impact of their weaknesses. The reason to identify your key strengths and weaknesses is not so that you can improve your weaknesses. It is much more important to identify your key strengths and leverage these.

The management guru, Peter Drucker, in his classic article, "Managing Oneself", states: "One should waste as little effort as possible on improving areas of low competence. It takes far more energy and work to improve from in-competence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence. And yet most people . . . concentrate on making incompetent performers into mediocre ones. Energy, resources, and time should go instead to making a competent person into a star performer."

- ◆ **Know Your Joys and Passions:** Be in tune to your emotions as you engage in your work. We all need to do elements of work that are tedious or displeasing, but the bulk of how you spend your day should satisfy you and make you feel good about your contributions and the impact of your efforts. Success is difficult to achieve without that level of satisfaction. Know that people who excel enjoy what they do and do what they enjoy.

As stated earlier, contemporary research affirms what ancient societies have known all along: those who are the wisest amongst a group are those who have had rich experiences and have learned from them. Consider these aspects of learning from experience.

- ◆ **Development Occurs Within the Context of Work:** During most of the 20th century, companies and their employees tended to think about professional development as something that happened away from the job, in classrooms and workshops and seminars. These development options are useful to build basic skills and provide opportunity for workers to interact within a cohort, but they do not compare with the capacity for development of real skills

learned on the job and through the experiences of meaningful work with real implications and results.

- ◆ **Growth Occurs Through Challenge and Stretch:** Once one achieves a level of comfort and ease within their job responsibilities then high performance may continue but growth and development will not. Individuals with the highest potential and talent need to continue to grow until their potential is reached. This means applying a consistent level of tension with respect to challenging the individual's skills, perceptions, and experiences. The appropriate "stretch" for development is consistently requiring job expectations that are just beyond those skills already mastered.
- ◆ **Diversity of Experience and Depth Versus Breadth:** Know that one's career goals need to shape career experiences or else career experiences will shape career potential. Understanding how to apply this goes back to the tenet of "Know Thyself." Know how you will define your career success so you can build the appropriate career path to get there. Are your passions energized through expertise: would you like to know all there is to know about a particular area? If so, you need to build an expert's career that is deeply steeped within that area of expertise.

Or perhaps your passions are energized by leading broad sets of people and your vision stretches across an organization or industry. In this case you need to build a leader's career that is broad and encompasses a variety of knowledge and perspective. However, whether you are building depth or breadth, diversity of experience is critical to ongoing development. Always be looking for the next challenge, the newest goal that will mix things up and add another layer to the fabric of your career.

- ◆ **Apply Your Lessons of Experience:** So, an important distinction in understanding how to develop through experiences is that the experience itself is only half the task. What is critical is that you *learn* from the experience and thus apply these lessons to future experiences. Again, this requires reflection and self-awareness and purposeful cognizance relative to learning. "What did I learn from that?" is a common question you should ask yourself following successes and failures. And when you have your answer to that question, be sure it is applied to your next experience.

Learning from the experience – the task, the challenge, the work, the goals – is only half of the lesson's potential. Each experience puts you in touch with people – clients, peers, reports, bosses, teachers and mentors – all of whom have their own sets of lessons for you.

- ◆ **Seek Diversity of Perspective:** Just as you should seek diverse experiences to expand your skill set, you should also seek diverse perspectives to expand your own thinking. We all enjoy and have a comfort level with people who are “like me.” But these people will only reinforce your current thinking without necessarily expanding or challenging you to think differently – and just as in experiences, collecting diverse perspectives results in growth and development.
- ◆ **Observe Others:** Be a people watcher. Be aware of how your colleagues interact with others and assess what works and what doesn’t. Learn from those colleagues who are effective – borrow their strategies and approaches. Learn from those colleagues who are ineffective – guard against making the same mistakes you see them make as they interact.
- ◆ **Exposure, Exposure, Exposure:** Anytime you can work on a project that exposes you to new contacts, new audiences, new networks – do it! Remember this: it isn’t really about who you know but it is all about who knows you.
- ◆ **Solicit Feedback Regularly and Ask for Support:** Okay, so you heard this one already in Step One. It’s that important to hear it again. One way you learn from people is to learn what they think about you and can provide feedback about how effective you are in interacting with them. When you receive feedback that requires you to adjust your behavior or experiment with new ways of interacting, ask your feedback providers to support you and help you to improve by reminding you when you slip back to old patterns or acknowledging you when you successfully implement new ones.
- ◆ **Networks:** Successful people are well networked, period. It may seem as though their broad and loyal networks of friends and associates are effortless and naturally attracted to the successful person’s charismatic style. But the truth is probably more likely that the successful person works hard to keep connected to these networks by remaining cognizant of comings and goings and by keeping proactive and systematic goals to stay connected.
- ◆ **Manage Your Own Performance Management:** Development on the job almost always means needing to learn from your boss. But some of us are more blessed than others when it comes to bosses who are natural coaches and mentors. Don’t let a boss who is poor in performance management deprive you of the lessons you need to learn from him or her. Be proactive and persistent. Manage upwards: schedule time with him or her, come prepared to the meeting with a structured agenda, a self-assessment of recent performance, and be prepared to solicit feedback directly.

In closing, wisdom and success are within everyone’s reach through three steps you should practice daily.

- ◆ **Know thyself:** solicit feedback, reflect, do what you love!
- ◆ **Learn from experience:** use work to learn, challenge yourself, expose yourself to diverse experiences, and apply your lessons of experience.
- ◆ **Learn from people:** seek diversity of perspective, be a people watcher, seek exposure, ask for support, maintain your networks, and take responsibility for your own performance management.

14) Promote your Personal Growth and Motivation

There is no denying the fact that when you retire your lifestyle too changes. This does not in anyway mean that you will no longer lead a happy and contended life. Retirement can be beautiful if you plan it well. Unlike in years gone by, planning for life after retirement

requires much more thought and more money simply because our expectations are much higher today. The desire to lead a carefree lifestyle after retirement is certainly uppermost in the minds of most people.

Some priority areas you should consider are:

Health:

Your health should be your first major concern after retirement. How best you can maintain good health and remain active will determine the lifestyle you will be able to enjoy in the years to come. Proper diet and a

daily walk for about forty five minutes will keep you fit and healthy. Additionally joining a Senior Citizens Club and participating in their social activities and regular exercise programs will be helpful.

Part-Time Work or Voluntary Work:

Let us face the fact that all of us humans possess a certain amount of ego and pride and our jobs gave us the opportunity to display them. That has all disappeared now. This happens to everyone who retires from active service and this is what life is all about.

If you are fit and active and if you need an additional income, you can find a part-time job that you will be happy with. If you are unable to get one, the next best thing is to look for a voluntary job. Many organizations are manned by retired personnel whose work ethics are greatly valued and appreciated. Doing a voluntary job, helping people can be very satisfying and gives you the added satisfaction of continuing to be in the public eye even after retirement.

Instead of worrying, think of ways and means of adopting yourself to the changing circumstances.

Computer and the Internet:

Today the computer and the internet provide you with a wonderful opportunity to keep yourself occupied for several hours in your new lifestyle. This is indeed a blessing for many retirees who are knowledgeable

about the use of the computer. News from around the world, music, videos, complete novels are all right there at your finger tips. You could also be in touch with your kith and kin by e-mail. Those not conversant

with the use of the computer can easily gain proficiency by attending special classes conducted for senior citizens.

The computer and the internet also provide you with a great opportunity to earn an additional income while keeping yourself mentally active. Thus life after retirement can be financially remunerative too.

You can enroll yourself with online paid survey companies and participate in online surveys for which you will be remunerated.

Conclusion:

With better living standards and the improved quality of life, the present perception of life after retirement is not about age but more about the state of your mind. It is what you think you

Participating in online auctions by enrolling yourself with e-Bay or other auction sites is another popular way of earning an additional income. An easy way of getting started is to sell your own items that you have discarded and stored away in the basement or attic.

Starting a Blog is another way of keeping yourself occupied and giving expression to your views and thoughts online while at the same time monetizing your Blog with Google AdSense and other affiliate programs.

are. So dump your fears about age and retirement and start enjoying your new lifestyle.

15) Qualities of a Good Mentor

A good mentoring relationship provides new employees as well as interns with someone that will share their professional knowledge and expertise in the field. A good mentor is available to answer any questions relevant to the job. Good mentor-mentee relationships are a two way street; consequently, if you want a good relationship with your mentor, become a good mentee. This requires a genuine interest in

your mentor and a willingness to do what it takes to become successful as an intern or new employee in the field. Following suggestions and recommendations as well as reading all pertinent literature available in the field is a good way to show your mentor that you are committed to being successful and that you take your career and responsibilities seriously.

A good mentor possesses the following qualities:

1. Willingness to share skills, knowledge, and expertise.

A good mentor is willing to teach what he/she knows and accept the mentee where they currently are in their professional development. Good mentors can remember what it was like just starting out in the field. The

mentor does not take the mentoring relationship lightly and understands that good mentoring requires time and commitment and is willing to continually share information and their ongoing support with the mentee.

2. Demonstrates a positive attitude and acts as a positive role model.

A good mentor exhibits the personal attributes it takes to be successful in the field. By showing the mentee

what it takes to be productive and successful, they are demonstrating the specific behaviors and actions required to succeed in the field.

3. Takes a personal interest in the mentoring relationship.

Good mentors do not take their responsibility as a mentor lightly. They feel invested in the success of the mentee. Usually this requires someone who is knowledgeable, compassionate, and possesses the attributes of a good teacher or trainer. Excellent communication skills are

also required. A good mentor is committed to helping their mentees find success and gratification in their chosen profession. Overall good mentoring requires empowering the mentee to develop their own strengths, beliefs, and personal attributes.

4. Exhibits enthusiasm in the field.

A mentor who does not exhibit enthusiasm about his/her job will ultimately not make a good mentor.

Enthusiasm is catching and new employees want to feel as if their job has meaning and the potential to create a good life.

5. Values ongoing learning and growth in the field.

Mentors are in a position to illustrate how the field is growing and changing and that even after many years there are still new things to learn. Anyone that feels stagnant in their current position will not make a good mentor. When starting out in a new career, people want to feel that the time and energy they spend learning will be rewarded and will ultimately provide them with career satisfaction. Good mentors are committed and are open to experimenting and learning practices that are new to the field. They

continually read professional journals and may even write articles on subjects where they have developed some expertise. They are excited to share their knowledge with new people entering the field and take their role seriously in teaching their knowledge to others. They may choose to teach or attend classes to further develop their knowledge and skills. They enjoy taking workshops and attending professional conferences provided through their membership in professional associations.

6. Provides guidance and constructive feedback.

One of the key responsibilities of a good mentor is to provide guidance and constructive feedback to their mentee. This is where the mentee will most likely grow the most by identifying their current strengths and weaknesses and learning how to use these to make themselves successful

in the field. A good mentor possess excellent communication skills and is able to adjust their communication to the personality style of the mentee. A good mentor will also provide the mentee with challenges that will foster professional development and a feeling of accomplishment in learning the field.

7. Respected by colleagues and employees in all levels of the organization.

Ideally mentees look up to their mentors and can see themselves filling the mentor's role in the future.

Mentees want to follow someone who is well respected by colleagues and co-workers and whose contribution in the field is appreciated.

8. Sets and meets ongoing personal and professional goals.

A good mentor continually sets a good example by showing how

his/her personal habits are reflected by personal and professional goals and overall personal success.

9. Values the opinions and initiatives of others.

A mentor who values others is also someone who works well in a team environment and is willing to share his/her success. A good mentor

appreciates the ongoing effort of the mentee and empowers him/her through positive feedback and reinforcement.

10. Motivates others by setting a good example.

The ultimate success of being a good mentor...

;

16) Career Mobility: A Choice or Necessity?

What is triggering the industrial, occupational, and geographical mobility of today's workers? Some believe it is a response to downsizing and restructuring. Others believe it reflects a pursuit for job advancement

and a better quality of life. This Digest examines the factors triggering workers' career mobility and suggests ways workers can use career mobility to capitalize on the dynamics of a changing workplace.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CAREER MOBILITY

Job mobility in the U.S. work force has become the standard employment pattern in today's workplace. Between 1991 and 1996, the median job tenure for men 25-64 years of age fell by an average of approximately 19 percent, with older workers most affected: males 55-64 years of age had a 29 percent drop in tenure and males 45-54 years of age, a 25 percent drop (Koretz 1997). Although the job tenures of females remained

somewhat constant during this period, this may reflect the increased numbers of women who have entered the work force during these same years rather than stable job tenure patterns. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 10 percent of the work force switches jobs every year (Henkoff 1996). The following are some of the factors contributing to the career mobility of today's workers.

SEARCH FOR COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT POSITIONS

Organizational downsizing, outsourcing, and restructuring have eliminated many positions of mid-level management (Appelbaum and Santiago 1997). The typical mid-management workers in transition are 45-58 years old with over 20 years of job tenure (Unger 1995). Many older workers nearing retirement age are also in transition as organizations increasingly offer them incentives to leave their jobs early. For the most part, these workers are not without skills, nor are they the victims of age discrimination. It is just that the skills they have and/or their job functions

no longer fit their organizations; they are outdated. Workers whose skills or motivations no longer fit the organization are being eliminated. "Over the past two decades, Fortune 500 companies have laid off millions of workers to re-engineer organizational functions" (Borchard 1995, p. 9). Knowing these facts, many workers who want to retain a competitive position in the work force are moving to acquire new skills that will enable them to fulfill new roles. They are taking risks (some imposed and some elected) to tackle the unfamiliar and develop the

skills they need to assume new and challenging positions in the

workplace.

PURSUIT OF A GOOD CAREER MATCH

Young workers typically demonstrate their quest for a good career match by frequent job moves. According to Feller (1996), "as many as 50% to 60% of all new hires leave their jobs within the first seven months" (p. 95). Some job churning may be due to limited knowledge of job requirements and unrealistic job expectations. For more experienced workers, the job hop may reflect an attempt to step up the career ladder. A person may have one or two short-

term jobs, but when that employment pattern is extensive, it can have a negative influence on an employer's decision to hire. Therefore, job hopping in search of a satisfying career should not become a way of life. Because it is costly to hire and train new workers, some employers believe that a worker must remain with a company for at least 4 years to enable the company to recover hiring costs alone (Blyth 1996).

DESIRE FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Some workers leave their jobs because they perceive this is the only way to advance. In organizations characterized by downsizing and restructuring, there are fewer opportunities for people to move up the traditional career ladder. Many mid-level management positions have been eliminated, causing the number of qualified candidates to exceed the number of job opportunities. In addition, innovations such as precision manufacturing and networked computer terminals are enabling companies to realize increased levels of productivity with fewer workers. As companies outsource functions previously performed in house, they also eliminate internal opportunities (Kaye

1996). For workers who have high career aspirations, these conditions trigger career movement.

"The Glass Ceiling" phenomenon has prompted many female managers to leave their organizations because of the lack of advancement opportunities. A recent study by the U.S. Department of Labor corroborates the lack of equal opportunity for top-level positions of the organization. "At the highest levels of corporations, the promise of reward for preparation and pursuit of excellence is not equally available to members of all groups" (Stroh 1996, p. 102).

SEARCH FOR PERSONAL SATISFACTION

Boredom, mismatched values, and conflicts with other life roles can create personal unrest and trigger job movement—upward, downward, lateral, and outward. Job dissatisfaction occurs for any number of reasons. Boredom often occurs when people plateau in their jobs—when their skills and the direction of the organization become stagnant (Kaye 1996). People who are involved in work that lacks personal meaning and value also experience job dissatisfaction, a major reason for initiating job transition. Another reason individual's plan transition from one job to another is because their current jobs are in conflict with

other priorities, e.g., marriage, children, parents, and outside interests—all of which take time and effort. In a poll commissioned by the Merck Family (Ehrenreich 1995), 72 percent of the male respondents and 87 percent of the female respondents stated that they want more time to spend with their children. Twenty-eight percent said they voluntarily took a pay cut in the last year to make such changes in their lives. Sales of such books as *YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE* (Dominguez and Robin 1992) are another indication of the changing values and priorities of many workers that precipitate career mobility (Griffin 1995).

WAYS TO CAPITALIZE ON CAREER MOBILITY

Whether career mobility is initiated by the employer because the tasks, skills, or characteristics of given workers are no longer needed or by workers because they are dissatisfied with some aspect of their jobs or organizations, connecting with new

employment can be unsettling. It requires change and change demands flexibility and compromise. Following are some ways workers can use career mobility to capitalize on opportunities in the workplace.

◆ HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Looking at future opportunities with enthusiasm and as a chance to tackle new challenges can enhance the reconnection process. For many, transition can lead to self-renewal—to a reassessment of existing skills and the development of new skills that will enable them to be competitive in a rapidly changing workplace. "In the

early 1990s, one university president told incoming freshmen that as many as 85 percent of the jobs that will be available by 2010 haven't even been thought of yet! He also predicted that these students should expect to have 4 to 5 career—not job—changes during their working life" (Unger 1995, p. 44).

◆ **DEVELOP NEW SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES**

Skill enhancement through continuing education and training can open new doors to workers in transition. In the new workplace, characterized by continuous improvement, international quality standards, self-management, teamwork, and high skill-high performance expectations, supervisory and quality control tasks

are moving to the hands of all workers. As a result, the skills required for successful employment are growing in number and expanding in function. Some educators believe that "the fastest growing and economically most promising positions are technical jobs requiring training beyond high school but less than a four-year degree" (Feller 1996, p. 148).

◆ **ENGAGE IN CAREER EXPLORATION**

Career exploration and self-assessment are another area of focus for workers in transition, who may be young adults between the ages of 28 and 35, who are prompted to move from an existing job to learn if there is something more satisfying out there; mid-career adults, 40-55 years

old, who are searching for work that they deem worthwhile; and early retirees (55 years and beyond) who want to build careers in new directions. The patterns established to acquire new skills and self-knowledge during the transition period can set the stage for lifelong learning.

◆ **BE WILLING TO COMPROMISE**

Successful transitions may also require the development of realistic job reward expectations and an attitude of compromise. Workers moving to smaller, mid-sized companies may find that they must accept reduced salaries, benefits, and job security, which may require a readjustment of financial goals and spending habits. Even if a new job provides the same salary, the benefits may be less than in the previously

held job. "A Commerce Department Survey found that only 32 percent of 3.4 million men age 25 to 54 who changed full-time jobs from 1991 to 1993 had employer-sponsored health insurance in their new jobs, compared with 49 percent who had coverage under their old employers. And, among 1.8 million similar female job changers, the incidence of employer-sponsored coverage fell from 46 percent to 30 percent" (Koretz 1995, p. 38).

◆ **SEEK CAREER COUNSELING**

For those whose work history has been characterized by "job churning," career counseling may be necessary. Two reasons for successive job changes that have implications for school-to-work transition efforts are the lack of appropriate job matching and the failure of newly hired

workers to allow time to become acclimated to the job. Educators can facilitate transitions by providing students work-related experience through internships, work experience programs, mentoring, and so forth. Coaching on the need to allow time to learn the ropes, become familiar with

the company rules/regulations, and become socialized to the new situation is another way educators can

◆ **BE CREATIVE**

Exploring alternative ways to deal with job dissatisfaction may reduce job hopping. Not all efforts to step up the career ladder require movement to a new organization. Sometimes career advancement can be achieved by developing new skills and a willingness to assume new responsibilities. Lateral shifts offer another way to achieve career mobility without leaving the organization. Employees can often broaden their knowledge and skills by shifting to a part of the organization that is targeted for expansion or restructuring with new technology. "Downshifting" provides another alternative for workers who are dissatisfied with their jobs by enabling them to return to aspects of their jobs that are more enjoyable or present a personal challenge. For example, a school administrator may recognize that his/her greatest enjoyment and sense of accomplishment came from teaching and, subsequently, initiate a return to

Career mobility is a trend that is likely to continue as workers assume more responsibility for their career development and advancement. The factors influencing mobility may change, but the ways of using it as a

help young workers make successful work transitions (Feller 1996).

the classroom. Downward shifts may also make it possible for individuals to incorporate other priorities more regularly into their daily lives, such as further education, health needs, and family.

Alternative employment patterns offer another option for workers in or anticipating transition because they are dissatisfied with their current full-time status. Because part-time employment offers flexibility for the organization as well as the worker, nearly 75 percent of all employers in a survey conducted by Work/Family Directions indicated they now permit part-time employment compared to 50 percent in 1992 ("FYI" 1996). Flextime, another employment option, is also increasing in acceptance. In the same 1996 survey, "57 percent of the employers offer flextime today compared with only 48 percent in 1992" (ibid., p. 1). Job sharing and telecommuting, although still rather new, have the potential to become more widespread in future.

tool for capitalizing on the dynamics of the changing workplace demand continued skill development, self-reliance and resilience, and lifelong learning.

17) Interviewing Skills for Applicants: Top tips for tough interview questions.

The best defense for any job applicant is to prepare for an interview well in advance by anticipating tough questions and

preparing answers that focus on how he or she can contribute to the employer and why he or she is the best candidate for the job.

The Function of a Job Interview

The whole point of a job interview is not just to evaluate an applicant's skills and accomplishments, but also to ensure applicants are a good "fit" for the company. Interviewers also want to see how applicants react in high pressure situations.

Interviewers focus on certain types of questions to elicit as much information as possible from the applicant. Most questions also have an underlying purpose and answers often tell the interviewer more than the applicant may assume.

Types of Tough Interview Questions

Examples of common tough interview questions include:

1. Tell me about yourself
2. What is your greatest strength?
3. What is your greatest weakness?
4. What are your salary expectations?
5. Why do you want to work for us?
6. Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years time?
7. Abstract questions e.g. If you could be a cartoon character, who would you be?
8. Behaviour based questions e.g. Tell me about a time when...

Preparing Answers for Tough Interview Questions

Here are some suggestions for how to answer difficult questions:

1. Tell me about yourself:

Applicants should prepare a one to two minute description of themselves that illustrates their potential value to the employer. They should give relevant information about their academic, technical and professional

background that illustrates the contribution they can make to the company (e.g. "For the past four years I have focused on preparing myself for a career in... by...").

2. What is your greatest strength?

Applicants should avoid giving any obvious answers, but rather give concrete examples and evidence (e.g. “My previous supervisor said...”).

3. What is your greatest weakness?

It is again best to avoid an obvious answer like “I’m a perfectionist”. Rather, applicants should choose a weakness that is not too serious and won’t affect their performance on the job. They should leave the interviewer with a positive thought by de-emphasising the weakness and focusing on what they are doing to overcome the weakness.

4. What are your salary expectations?

Applicants should research expected salary ranges for the position and request what they think they are worth within that range. They should back up their answers by drawing attention to their qualifications and experience.

5. Why do you want to work for us?

This question gives applicants a chance to illustrate what they know about the company. Applicants should give specific reasons related to what they know about the employer and what genuinely interests them about the company. Applicants should focus on what they can contribute, rather than what they can get out of the job/company.

6. Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years time?

Applicants should not identify specific positions, but rather indicate areas in which they want to improve their professional skills and where they see themselves increasing their level of responsibility.

7. Abstract questions

The interviewer is testing whether applicants can think on their feet. It is best to think carefully and respond with an answer – regardless of what one comes up with, anything is better than “I have no idea.” Applicants should then briefly explain their choice.

8. Behaviour based questions

Applicants should think about and prepare examples from their academic, professional and social lives that illustrate where they have shown leadership, dealt with a conflict, failed and succeeded. These “stories” can be applied to many behaviour based questions. Applicants should always try and illustrate how they

showed initiative, and they should ensure that they focus on a positive outcome. Applicants should prepare an answer that describes the situation, what action they took and what the result was.

Final tips for answering Tough Questions

Throughout the interview, applicants should remember to:

- ◆ Take a few seconds to collect their thoughts
- ◆ Avoid yes or no answers
- ◆ Give balanced answers to behaviour based questions
- ◆ Focus on the position and what they can bring to it
- ◆ Try to relate their answers to the duties of the position
- ◆ Avoid criticising previous employers, staff or instructors
- ◆ Be prepared to lead or initiate discussions
- ◆ Ensure they have prepared questions for the interviewer
- ◆ Maintain eye contact and avoid fidgeting

Preparing answers for tough interview questions in advance will help the applicant feel confident and relaxed, make the interview process a far more relaxing and worthwhile experience and help land the job.

18) The Power of Positive Thinking

It is very hard to think and keep a positive outlook when many of us face issues in everyday life that prevent us from seeing the positive side and outcome of the situation. How can we think positive thoughts when the issue is negative like facing a death of a loved one or losing your favorite job? Well, every human being's mind thinks and acts differently. Knowing the power of positive thinking can improve your life, not only in your personal life but in your workplace as well. To know and understand the process of thinking positively you have to be in the right mindset and actually believe that positive thoughts do create your reality, which is your everyday life. By changing the way your mind assesses issues in your life, the power of positive thinking can be your key to happiness in life and a successful career. Positive thinking is considered a mental attitude that admits into the mind and helps us to generate words and images to expand our growth and success. However, not everyone believes in positive thinking, but those people don't have positive attitudes towards life. Those of us that do believe in positive thinking know that it works. Most people can catch on to positive thinking very quickly, but first they have a positive attitude and believe that positive things can happen when you have the right mindset. You need to be able to understand and believe that positive

thinking does work; you just have to believe in it.

Your body produces positive energy which then generates to other people around you, and they can feel that positive energy coming from you; just like they would feel your negative energy. When in a workplace, if you are not a positive person, your co-workers are not going to want to be around you. Therefore, if you give a positive attitude towards your work and others around you, more people will feel that positive energy that your body is giving off, and they will know that you are a pleasant person to be around.

To develop the power of positive thinking, most importantly you need to change your vocabulary from "I can't," and "I'll try to," change your words to "I can," and "I am able to." Changing your vocabulary will change the way you think, act and talk, not just towards yourself but also to people around you and will improve your everyday life. Being a positive person is beneficial to your health and well being. Thinking positive makes us stronger, happier and healthier. By enforcing positive thinking into your life, you will be able to handle those stressful situations that once occurred. Remember, think positive not negative; it is the Law of Attraction.

CREATING POSITIVE EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE

Creating a positive employee attitude can be difficult at times, but it's the most important thing that you can do as a manager. Having negative energy at work drains all of your energy in your body, it makes you feel tired, weak and it's very hard to focus. Creating a positive employee attitude will help everyone be more positive and happy in the morning; therefore, work will be more enjoyable to go to every morning.

In order to educate your employees about creating a positive attitude in the workplace, you have to already be in the mindset yourself. By doing this you will

be able to set a good example for your employees to observe and follow. You also need to create an active team-working atmosphere to help your employees be motivated to have a positive attitude in your workplace and toward their coworkers.

First, you need to start by having a seminar session. In this session you need to introduce to your employees their importance to the company and that they are the ones that contribute to helping your company be successful. Discuss the difference between positive and negative

attitudes employees' project in the workplace and how those attitudes affect the workplace environment. Explain to them changing their behavior to being a positive person in your workplace and how it can benefit them not only at work but also in their everyday lives. To conclude the seminar, you should be encouraging those positive attitudes, that will create better relationships between each individual co-worker. It also opens new doors of opportunity for your employees to be able thinking positively together which will help to generate new ideas, learn positive decision making skills and effective communication in the workplace. Dealing with the negative attitudes you need to address each negative attitude, and meet the needs of the employees, to help them behave positively. Let them know that the negativity is what is holding them back from succeeding in their lives.

This seminar will open many new doors of opportunity and will help your employees to create new positive attitude that will benefit them not only at work but outside of work as well. Remember anything can happen if you think positively about it.

STEPS TO POSITIVE THINKING

If you're not sure how to implement positive thinking in your life, here are five easy steps to help educate and motivate yourself to become a more positive thinker.

1. Become aware of your emotions, thoughts and feelings. Differentiate yourself and figure out what your positive and negative thoughts are.
2. Get rid of your negative thoughts; you don't need them. Negative thoughts will only hold you back.
3. Change all those negative thoughts into positive ones because positive thoughts help create positive energy and a healthier lifestyle.
4. Incorporate the new positive energy and thoughts into your lifestyle and you will see all the new positive things that will come to you. Keep up with this positive energy thinking, keep telling yourself to stay positive, remember trying isn't doing, you have to actually do it to get the positive outcome.

HOW POSITIVE THINKING REDUCES WORKPLACE STRESS

In every working environment there are always stressful situations, but these situations are only stressful if you let them be. Your thoughts create your own reality, and if you think something is going to stress you out it will. When thinking that a situation is going to be stressful you are setting your brain and your emotions up for the worst. It is far better to think to yourself that this situation is going to be challenging and I know that I can handle it. A lot of people get stressed out at work when they have never done something before, like if you get a new assignment. Instead of saying "I don't even know how to approach this, instead say "this is a new learning experience and I know I can do it." When you say positive things you are saying a positive affirmation, and if you say it over a couple times, positive energy will come to you and the outcome will be very rewarding.

With thinking positive and creating a positive environment for yourself, your workplace stress will drop immensely. You will find that tasks and once difficult situations are now easier to deal with. With such a small change you can make such a huge difference; why would you not incorporate positive thinking into your workplace career? Applying positive thinking into your workplace career will also help with stress at home and away from work. Positive energy is very powerful and can be used to help improve stress in everyday life, by incorporating it into your lifestyle your life will be much more enjoyable, stress free and create a healthier environment for everyone around you. No one wants to be around someone that is stressed all the time; you may not realize that you project stressful negative energy but by throwing out the old negativity and creating new, good positive energy you will see the changes in your everyday lifestyle and love it!

HOW TO APPLY POSITIVE THINKING IN THE WORKPLACE

Positive thinking is one of the most important components of any business' success. In order to achieve positive thinking you may have to change your life dramatically. After reading my newsletter what have you learned? Could you incorporate positive thinking into your lifestyle? Of course you can...just think positive.

Applying positive thinking to your life and workplace is beneficial to every person; it helps you so you can virtually do anything in life. When learning the power that positive thinking has, what it can create and solve is amazing. Being aware and able to apply positive thinking into your workplace will only help create and generate new ideas and opportunities that can be profitable and fulfilling.

When trying to enforce a positive thinking atmosphere in your workplace, everyone needs to be on

the same page. If there are people that are higher in position than you, make a proposal of your new idea to get it out there, and create positive energy to help make your idea work. Then educate the people that are below you in position; this will help them expand and grow. Making sure that everyone is working together, this is very important because you don't want to leave anybody out. Positive thinking has its greatest effect when everybody who is on the same team is on the same page. If not everyone might as well work as individuals because teamwork is the best problem solving solution. With the five articles that I have created, I have taken all of my knowledge and incorporated it into my lifestyle and it has worked exceptionally to my advantage. To share it with everyone is a privilege. I hope that it helps change your life as well and helps you become a more positive person.

Performance Management

“The value of achievement lies in the achieving.”

Alber Einstein

19) Getting the Most from Performance Appraisals

Does your organisation have one of those annual 'occasions' that few look forward to: the annual appraisal or performance review? How do you look forward to it? I wonder how people talk about it before and after.

Are appraisals worth doing? If done properly - yes. If done poorly - no!!!

Why have appraisals? When carried out properly they can achieve a number of benefits for all parties. The organisation, the manager and the appraisee can:

- ◆ establish current levels of performance, and the organisation benchmark across departments or functions,
- ◆ identify ways of improving performance, individually and collectively,
- ◆ set clear goals for the future,
- ◆ assess potential and desire for development,
- ◆ establish the appropriate means of motivation,
- ◆ improve communication throughout.

Some of the typical problems that happen to lead to poor appraisals are:

- ◆ It is an annual process
- ◆ Nothing has happened with the outcome of the last one
- ◆ There is no on-going feedback or review of progress
- ◆ Things can change in between, whether it is the manager or the job!
- ◆ The process is not taken seriously from the top
- ◆ The organisational culture views the whole process as a chore to be endured
- ◆ Insufficient preparation time or effort
- ◆ The 'regency' effect where only the previous 6-8 weeks are reviewed
- ◆ Too much focus on the negatives or problems of the year
- ◆ It is too subjective and too much is based on opinion
- ◆ It is too time consuming and interferes with day-to-day work
- ◆ Appraisals are just part of the salary negotiation

When you look at what can be achieved and compare the benefits with the reasons why they often fail to deliver, you can see that a lot of this is due to the attitude of the organization and the line managers, starting from

the top!
Think about what can happen when appraisals are handled in a constructive manner. They allow the organization and individuals to:

- ◆ Learn from the past to improve the future
- ◆ Build on successes and strengths for the future
- ◆ Recognize individuals' strengths and abilities
- ◆ Identify areas to develop skills and knowledge
- ◆ Value individual contribution
- ◆ Improve working relationships through clear communication

This does not mean that managers should “duck” difficult issues or things they are not happy with. However, there should be no surprises at an appraisal. Feedback on performance should be given at the time - not stored up for the appraisal!!! As a manager, if you have concerns, deal with them. Most people want to be given feedback on their performance regularly (and that does not mean annually!!) - even if it is to be told they have to improve.

One challenge in many organizations is to use the current system effectively. Too many people get caught up in worrying about the paperwork - whether designing a new set or using the existing. I recall working with one client in developing a good,

thorough, process only to be questioned by some directors from their Scandinavian partner about why we were going to so much trouble. They held up a blank sheet of paper and explained that was their idea of all they needed for a productive appraisal!!! They are right. The reality is that a productive appraisal owes more to the quality of the communication between the people involved than to the paperwork!

Should appraisals involve salary reviews? This is a quandary with no straightforward answer. When they do, there is a risk that the amount of the rise becomes the absolute focus of the discussion and can even be a negotiation. If they don't, how objective is the salary award when it is given?

My own view is that the salary review and appraisal can be linked, yet held very separately. There is no reason for not holding the appraisal, setting some goals and even specifying some behavioral change and then using this as a part of the salary discussion. Although there is a risk in having the appraisal and salary combined it can work, regardless of the gap. After all,

shouldn't salary and raises reflect performance rather than just opinion? If appraisals are carried out well and constructively there should be a fit between the two.

Everyone involved has to take their share of responsibility for making appraisals work. While the tips below will not guarantee success, they will help you to get more from the process, whatever your role.

If you are the 'appraiser'

- ◆ Make the time to prepare properly!
- ◆ Set a time for the review - and stick to it! Do not move it around - what message does that send out? Allow anything from 1 - 2 hours.
- ◆ Choose a place where you can have the privacy for a proper, open meeting with no interruptions! Turn off mobile phones.
- ◆ Have a short meeting with the interviewee a few days before and outline what you want them to do before the meeting and during it.
- ◆ Look at last year's review and identify what progress has been made.
- ◆ Think about the good things the employee has achieved and done - do not just look for the negatives.
- ◆ Be specific with the points you want to discuss and review - with evidence not just opinion.
- ◆ Set an agenda or structure for the meeting and stick to it.
- ◆ Make sure they do a lot of the talking, it is THEIR review not yours! Also, LISTEN to what they say and build on it
- ◆ Remember to give feedback on performance or behavior - not personality!
- ◆ Note where job changes might have impacted on achievement of the goals from last year and identify successes.
- ◆ Set and agree clear, SMART goals, both short and medium term.

If you are being reviewed or appraised:

- ◆ Remember to 'own' the process - you have a responsibility to make it work for you, it is not just down to your boss!
- ◆ Make time to prepare by reviewing what you have done and how, even if there is no formal self-assessment process.
- ◆ Obtain a copy of the previous review from HR or your boss if you don't have one.
- ◆ If your role or responsibilities have changed since the previous appraisal, identify the goals you achieved up until the change and those after.
- ◆ Make notes of the key points you want to mention.
- ◆ Be honest in your self-assessment about what you could have improved upon
- ◆ Be specific about the things you have done well.
- ◆ Think about what you want for the short, medium and long-term. What support, training or development would you like?
- ◆ What might be sensible areas to set goals for the future? Be willing to suggest these to your boss.
- ◆ Ask for clear and specific feedback.
- ◆ If you would like your boss to manage you differently, use this as a time to ask, giving reasons about why it would benefit all of you!

Ensure you are clear about what the boss thinks and why - and whether it fits with your own self-Finally, there should be a sense of agreement about what has happened, what will happen and how.

To reinforce the effectiveness, avoid making it just an annual event. Set on-going reviews to ome notes throughout the year of successes and any particular challenges or events you want to recall later. It will help to reduce some of the subjectivity of poor appraisals and also makes sure

assessment. If there is a difference, explore why this is the case. Work to reach agreement.

monitor progress towards the goals, to support any training or development and to improve communication between bosses and teams.

An idea for all is to keep s

things are remembered throughout the year!

20) Improving Performance Management

What a disappointment that was! I went into my supervisor's office expecting to discuss my job performance and plans, but he did all the talking. Then he just handed me the evaluation form and told me to sign it.

"These 360-degree reports are useless—just a bunch of numbers in distributions of numbers! What do all the scores mean? Some of these competencies don't even apply to my job. Who are these people who rated me? How familiar are they with my performance?"

Difficulties in evaluating and discussing employee performance have become so common that many employees complain that feedback from supervisors is inadequate or misleading. Despite innovations such as "360-degree" and "competency-based" evaluations, surveys continue to indicate that most employees *and* supervisors find that performance evaluation—more recently known as performance management—often does more harm than good.

What's wrong? The answer, and the solutions, requires a close examination of *why* performance management is done, *what* is

evaluated and discussed and *how* the process is carried out.

WHY

Too Much Scoring, Not Enough Discussing and Planning.

Performance management supports two objectives: 1) to *evaluate the past*—document the quality of employee performance and results, and communicate decisions regarding salary increases, promotions and so on; and 2) to *plan the future*—discuss employee performance and results and set plans for improvement. But since the vast majority of organizations formally review employee performance once a year, managers try to achieve both objectives in one meeting.

When performance management is an annual event, it becomes an annual failure.

Why?

Because in spite of best intentions to discuss past performance and plan the future, managers find themselves delivering the annual report card and defending the scores that employees object to. Furthermore, 360-degree feedback methods in which employees receive feedback from not only their bosses, but also co-workers, customers and staff, are already being questioned because

they overwhelm employees with scores.

Solution: Score Annually, but Discuss and Plan as Often as Necessary.

Employees, team members and supervisors discuss the quality of recent performance and then set plans to develop the employee and improve his or her performance as an essential, natural part of their jobs. “Informal” performance management takes place during day-to-day feedback and discussion as supervisors and team members review work in progress.

Performance management can also be done in “semi-formal” reviews conducted every few months or at the end of a project. But when these discussions take place with rating forms, they become too formal and ineffective. One secret to effective performance management, therefore, is to conduct informal and semi-informal discussions as often as necessary—no forms and no scores (more about how to do this later). In addition, annual salary review interviews are necessary to sum up the year’s performance and discuss administrative decisions based on employee performance.

WHAT

Evaluation Forms Don’t Apply to the Employee’s Job.

Because performance evaluation forms are typically created by human resources departments or consultants, supervisors often have difficulty applying them to their employees. Problems arise when evaluation forms ask supervisors to rate employees on personal traits, such as maturity, attitude, personality, initiative, dependability; or on competencies like interpersonal skill, job knowledge and organizational skill. First, employees often become defensive when they receive general personal comments like, “you rate only 3 on a 5-point scale of maturity,” or “you have poor interpersonal skills.”

Second, employees often disagree with the supervisor’s ratings because the characteristic being evaluated wasn’t directly observed. Third, evaluations of employees in vague, subjective terms like personal traits and competencies may lead to charges of discrimination.

Solution: Give Feedback about Job-related Results and Performance.

One key to effective performance management is to discuss information that employees understand and can use to develop themselves and improve their performance.

Therefore, employees, team members and supervisors should participate in creating the evaluation form (see my paper “Seven Ways to Improve

Performance Appraisals, *HR Magazine*, May, 1993, p. 77). Useful feedback is *behavioral* (not personal traits), *specific* (not general competencies) directly *observable*, and clearly *job related*.

Two topics, results and performance, meet these standards. Supervisors and employees are aware of the results employees achieve. For example, exceeding or failing to meet sales quotas, or producing or failing to achieve quality assurance standards. Employees, team members and supervisors can discuss specific results achieved and set targets for the future.

Most supervisors and team members also observe how employees perform specific job responsibilities that enable them to achieve results. For example, employees may manage time poorly, communicate well, object to changes in procedures and argue with team members. During feedback and planning discussions, the appropriate parties can discuss how well the employee performed these responsibilities and make plans to improve performance in each of them.

HOW

Too Much Top-Down Communication.

Many supervisors dislike performance management because they feel like a punitive parent sitting in judgment. Unfortunately, annual

review meetings force them into this role as they walk in with completed evaluation forms and begin the discussion.

Furthermore, 360-degree feedback reports delivered in hard copy or electronically, are entirely top-down.

Solution: Listen and Probe First; Talk and Prescribe Later

An obvious way to avoid this top-down style is to encourage employees to talk about their own performance *before* the supervisor or team members give feedback. This can be done during day-to-day discussions and in “semi-formal” reviews conducted every few months or at the end of a project. As stated earlier, these periodic reviews can be done very effectively *without* evaluation forms and ratings. It is possible to reinforce positive performance, identify areas of improvements, and set performance goals without scoring employees.

The secret is to draw out the employee’s views of his or her performance and plans for improvement by asking questions. Supervisors and team members can always add points later in the discussion if the employee doesn’t raise them first.

This approach can also be used during the annual performance review. To ensure that employees are prepared to talk about their own performance; supervisors can

schedule the performance review ahead of time and ask each employee to prepare for the meeting by considering his or her own performance and results and by setting work goals and developmental plans. To ensure more two-way communication, the supervisor or team member can invite employee input and provide feedback and ratings *at the end of the discussion.*

This probing approach can be easily transferred to all types of performance discussions— day-to-day feedback, periodic “semi-formal” reviews, and even the annual event. Most people are aware of what they do well at work and what they need to improve and, if given the opportunity, they will identify their areas of strength *and also* constructively criticize their own performance while making plans for improvement. If they don’t, supervisors and team members can

propose ideas for improvement later in the discussion.

An Exercise in Upward Communication

“Constructive criticism” is a phrase commonly associated with performance management, and many supervisors struggle to find a way to tell employees that they are performing a job responsibility poorly and need a different approach, a training course or something else. Unfortunately, many employees feel personally criticized and become defensive.

The Initiate-Listen-Focus-Probe-Plan technique below provides a powerful tool to avoid such defensiveness. Try the following exercise with one of your employees or coworkers.

This is not a performance review; it’s just a job-related discussion. Begin with a general question about his or her performance.

- ◆ Initiate: “How would you rate your performance during the last six months?” or “How do you feel about your performance during the last quarter?”
- ◆ If you get a general response like, “Fine,” or “Pretty good,” or “8 on a 10-point scale,” follow up with a more focused question. “What in particular comes to mind?” or “What have you been particularly pleased with?” Your objective is to discuss a positive topic raised by the other person.
- ◆ Focus: “You mentioned that you were particularly satisfied with.... Let’s talk further about that aspect of your job.”
- ◆ How Probe: “How did you approach...?” or “What method did you use?”
- ◆ Why Probe: “How did you happen to choose that approach?” or “What was your rationale for that method?”

- ◆ Results Probe: “How has it worked out for you?” or “What results have you achieved?”
- ◆ Plan: “Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently?” or “What changes would you make if you worked on this again?”
- ◆ In hundreds of training courses, about 80% of the people questioned in this way have made specific suggestions to improve their performance in a part of their job that they feel they have done well. Furthermore, when asked about aspects of job performance to improve, they also set specific plans. Even more encouraging, after the training, supervisors and team members report more relaxed and positive two-way communication in both “semi-formal” and formal performance discussions.

Team Work

***TEAM = Together Everyone Achieves
More***

21) Keys to Team Building Success

Want to make your next team building activity or team building exercise live up to its true potential? Integrate the team building with real-time work goals. Establish a systematic workplace

integration and follow-up process - before you go on the team building adventure. You need to make the good feelings and the outcomes from the team building activity last beyond the final team building exercise.

Impact of Team Building Events

Without this attention to integration, corporate team building or planning events are, at best, a short term boost to employee enthusiasm and positive morale. If they are planned and executed well, people feel good about themselves and about each other. Employees get to know each other better and have a common experience to talk about back at work.

A frequent expectation from team building activities is that they build trust. Team building events have little to do with building trust, however, unless company planning, that is carefully followed up on and yields real results, is part of the team building or retreat.

Team Building Downsides and Risks

At worst, team building sessions help employees become cynical about their organizations. This occurs **when the team building events are held outside of the context of the company's normal way of doing business**. If you send people off to a team building event, as an example, but all rewards in your company are based on individual goals and efforts, the team building event will have no lasting impact.

People will lose productive hours complaining about the time and energy invested in the team building or planning activities. Unhappiness, management criticism and employees complaining to each other sap energy,

productivity and joy from the work day.

An event that is not **followed up with meaningful activities in the workplace** should not be held. They harm trust, motivation, employee morale and productivity. They don't solve the problems for which they were scheduled and held. You will eventually lose the people you most want to keep – especially if they don't see your organization getting better as a result of off-site team building and planning sessions.

If the team building event has no follow up, people become jaded about such events as a waste of time and energy. In fact, I don't lead team

building events that are just for team building without a business purpose, in addition to, or to build the event around. With recent organizational downsizing and cost cutting, people

Team Building Success Factors

The success of a team building or of a strategic planning activity begins well before the start of the sessions. Use a **team to plan the event** since you want to model the behavior you seek from the team building sessions you schedule. The likely long-term effectiveness of a team building event or corporate retreat is enhanced when you **incorporate annual team building events into an overall company structure**. This cultural framework of philosophies, values and practices is designed to build the concept of “team” on a regular basis. In this environment, team building sessions can yield supportive results

f team building and other offsite events are to offer value, **their inclusion in an overall corporate structure of philosophies, values and practices is critical**. People must already operate in a team-oriented environment that is characterized by such philosophies as shared purpose, shared vision, shared mission and a performance development system that enables people to grow both personally and professionally. Or, your organization must be proactively pursuing team work as a business and employee strategy.

feel as if they are already doing more than one job. In this context, team building for team building’s sake has lost popularity.

In such a system, **team behaviors are rewarded and recognized**. Teams solve problems and improve processes. There is a genuine concern for employees and the policies and work are employee and employee-family friendly. When a problem or failure occurs, the search is not for the guilty, but instead, managers ask, “What about the work system caused that person or team to fail?”

When such a structure exists on an ongoing basis within an organization, **team building events can enhance and help the system grow stronger**. Again, build the team building events around a business purpose to which all attendees can contribute, and you have the opportunity for an energizing, exciting growth opportunity.

Successful companies regularly demonstrate their commitment to building team unity, trust and positive morale among their employees in their daily workplace. Without this commitment and the presence of team building success factors, negative effects can result from formal team building or planning sessions.

I facilitated a team building and planning event recently in which a management team gathered to put

together their annual priorities. The group did a salutary job; they were set up to spend the quarter both productive and focused. They were excited and feeling a strong sense of direction.

The next day, much to my sorrow and their lost morale, their manager pulled out a list of everything that had

Conclusion

Team building and planning events and activities have the potential to bring the people you employ a strong sense of direction, workable plans and solutions, a powerful feeling of belonging with and on the team and clear, strategic customer-focused values.

Poorly planned and executed, created outside of the context of the total organization, the team building and planning sessions bring disillusionment, low morale and negative motivation. They fail to

not made their priority list at the team building event. He called this the “B” list and said that, even though these were not the priorities, they all had to be completed, too. Can you imagine the impact of telling them that all their work, thinking and prioritizing really didn’t matter? They had to accomplish it all anyway.

deliver the results expected. Organizations flounder with little strategic direction. Everyone works hard, but, usually on the wrong tasks and goals. Employees take baby steps toward accomplishing key action items and nothing important is finished.

And, when the next team building or off-site planning event is announced, the cycle generally repeats itself. Which approach to team building would you prefer to institute in your organization?

22) Keys to Building Great Work teams

Fostering teamwork is a top priority for many leaders. The benefits are clear: increased productivity, improved customer service, more flexible systems, employee empowerment. But is the

vision clear? To effectively implement teams, leaders need a clear picture of the seven elements high-performance teams have in common.

1. COMMITMENT

Commitment to the purpose and values of an organization provides a clear sense of direction. Team members understand how their work fits into corporate objectives and they agree that their team's goals are achievable and aligned with corporate mission and values. Commitment is the foundation for synergy in groups. Individuals are willing to put aside personal needs for the benefit of the work team or the company. When there is a meeting of the minds on the big picture this shared purpose provides a backdrop against which all team decisions can be viewed. Goals are developed with corporate priorities in mind. Team ground rules are set with consideration for both company and individual values. When conflict arises, the team uses alignment with

purpose, values, and goals as important criteria for acceptable solutions.

To enhance team commitment leaders might consider inviting each work team to develop team mission, vision, and values statements that are in alignment with those of the corporation but reflect the individuality of each team. These statements should be visible and "walked" every day. Once a shared purpose is agreed upon, each team can develop goals and measures, focus on continuous improvement, and celebrate team success at important milestones. The time spent up front getting all team members on the same track will greatly reduce the number of derailments or emergency rerouting later.

2. CONTRIBUTION

The power of an effective team is in direct proportion to the skills members possess and the initiative members expend. Work teams need people who have strong technical and interpersonal skills and are willing to learn. Teams also need self-leaders who take responsibility for getting

things done. But if a few team members shoulder most of the burden, the team runs the risk of member burnout, or worse member turnoff.

To enhance balanced participation on a work team, leaders should consider three factors that affect the level of

individual contribution: inclusion, confidence, and empowerment. The more individuals feel like part of a team, the more they contribute; and, the more members contribute, the more they feel like part of the team. To enhance feelings of inclusion, leaders need to keep work team members informed, solicit their input, and support an atmosphere of collegiality. If employees are not offering suggestions at meetings, invite them to do so. If team members miss meetings, let them know they were missed. When ideas even wild ideas are offered, show appreciation for the initiative.

Confidence in self and team affects the amount of energy a team member invests in an endeavor. If it appears that the investment of hard work is likely to end in success employees are more likely to contribute. If, on

3. COMMUNICATION

For a work group to reach its full potential, members must be able to say what they think, ask for help, share new or unpopular ideas, and risk making mistakes. This can only happen in an atmosphere where team members show concern, trust one another, and focus on solutions, not problems. Communication when it is friendly, open, and positive plays a vital role in creating such cohesiveness.

Friendly communications are more likely when individuals know and respect one another. Team members show caring by asking about each other's lives outside of work,

the other hand, success seems unlikely, investment of energy will wane. To breed confidence on a work team, leaders can highlight the talent, experience, and accomplishments represented on the team, as well as keep past team successes visible. The confidence of team members can be bolstered by providing feedback, coaching, assessment and professional development opportunities.

Another way to balance contribution on a work team is to enhance employee empowerment. When workers are involved in decisions, given the right training, and respected for their experience, they feel enabled and invest more. It is also important to have team members evaluate how well they support the contribution of others.

respecting individual differences, joking, and generally making all feel welcome.

Open communication is equally important to a team's success. To assess work performance, members must provide honest feedback, accept constructive criticism, and address issues head-on. To do so requires a trust level supported by Direct, honest communication.

Positive communication impacts the energy of a work team. When members talk about what they like, need, or want, it is quite different from wailing about what annoys or

frustrates them. The former energizes; the latter demoralizes.

To enhance team communication, leaders can provide skill training in

listening, responding, and the use of language as well as in meeting management, feedback and consensus building.

4. COOPERATION

Most challenges in the workplace today require much more than good solo performance. In increasingly complex organizations, success depends upon the degree of interdependence recognized within the team. Leaders can facilitate cooperation by highlighting the impact of individual members on

team productivity and clarifying valued team member behaviors. The following **F.A.C.T.S. model** of effective team member behaviors (follow-through, accuracy, timeliness, creativity, and spirit) may serve as a guide for helping teams identify behaviors that support synergy within the work team.

Follow-through

One of the most common phrases heard in groups that work well together is "You can count on it." Members trust that when a colleague agrees to return a telephone call, read a report, talk to a customer, attend a meeting, or change a

behavior, the job will be done. There will be follow-through. Team members are keenly aware that as part of a team, everything that they do --or don't do---impacts someone else.

Accuracy

Another common phrase heard in effective work groups is "We do it right the first time." Accuracy, clearly a reflection of personal pride,

also demonstrates a commitment to uphold the standards of the team, thus generating team pride.

Creativity

Innovation flourishes on a team when individuals feel supported by colleagues. Although taking the lead in a new order of things is risky business, such risk is greatly reduced

in a cooperative environment where members forgive mistakes, respect individual differences, and shift their thinking from a point of view to a Viewing point.

Timeliness

When work team members are truly cooperating they respect the time of others by turning team priorities into personal priorities, arriving for meetings on time, sharing information promptly, clustering

questions for people, communicating succinctly, and asking "Is this a good time?" before initiating interactions.

Spirit

Being on a work team is a bit like being part of a family. You can't have your way all of the time, and - to add value - you must develop a generous spirit. Leaders can help work teams by addressing these

"rules" of team spirit: value the individual; develop team trust; communicate openly; manage differences; share successes; welcome new members.

5. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

It is inevitable that teams of bright, diverse thinkers will experience conflict from time to time. The problem is not that differences exist, but in how they are managed. If people believe that conflict never occurs in "good" groups, they may sweep conflict under the rug. Of course, no rug is large enough to cover misperception, ill feelings, old hurts, and misunderstandings for very long. Soon the differences reappear. They take on the form of tension, hidden agendas, and stubborn positions. On the other hand, if leaders help work teams to manage conflict effectively, the team will be able to maintain trust and tap the collective power of the team. Work teams manage conflict better when members learn to shift their paradigms (mindsets) about conflict in general, about other parties involved, and about their own ability to manage conflict. Three techniques that help members shift obstructing paradigms are reframing, shifting shoes, and affirmations.

Reframing is looking at the glass

half-full, instead of half-empty. Instead of thinking "If I address this issue, it'll slow down the meeting," consider this thought: "If we negotiate this difference, trust and creativity will all increase."

Shifting Shoes is a technique used to practice empathy by mentally "walking in the shoes" of another person. You answer questions such as "How would I feel if I were that person being criticized in front of the group?" "What would motivate me to say what that person just said?"

Affirmations are positive statements about something you want to be true. For example, instead of saying to yourself right before a negotiating session, "I know I'm going to blow up", force yourself to say, "I am calm, comfortable, and prepared." If team members can learn to shift any negative mental tapes to more positive ones, they will be able to shift obstructing paradigms and manage conflict more effectively.

6. CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Tom Peters, in *Thriving On Chaos*, writes "The surviving companies will, above all, be flexible responders that create market initiatives. This has to happen through people." It is no longer a luxury to have work teams that can perform effectively within a turbulent environment. It is a necessity. Teams must not only respond to change, but actually initiate it. To assist teams in the management of change, leaders

should acknowledge any perceived danger in the change and then help teams to see any inherent opportunities. They can provide the security necessary for teams to take risks and the tools for them to innovate; they can also reduce resistance to change by providing vision and information, and by modeling a positive attitude themselves.

7. CONNECTIONS

A cohesive work team can only add value if it pays attention to the ongoing development of three important connections: to the larger work organization, to team members, and to other work teams.

When a work team is connected to the organization, members discuss team performance in relationship to corporate priorities, customer feedback, and quality measures. They consider team needs in light of what's good for the whole organization and what will best serve joint objectives. Leaders can encourage such connection by keeping communication lines open. Management priorities, successes, and headaches should flow one way; team needs, successes, and questions should flow in the other direction.

When a work team has developed strong connections among its own members, peer support manifests

itself in many ways. Colleagues volunteer to help without being asked, cover for each other in a pinch, congratulate each other publicly, share resources, offer suggestions for improvement, and find ways to celebrate together. A few ideas for developing and maintaining such connections are: allow time before and after meetings for brief socialization, schedule team lunches, create occasional team projects outside of work, circulate member profiles, take training together, and provide feedback to one another on development.

Teams that connect well with other work groups typically think of those groups as "internal customers". They treat requests from these colleagues with the same respect shown to external customers. They ask for feedback on how they can better serve them. They engage in win/win negotiating to resolve differences, and they share resources such as

training materials, videos, books, equipment, or even improvement ideas. To build stronger connections with other groups, work teams might consider: scheduling monthly cross-departmental meetings, inviting representatives to their own team meeting, "lending" personnel during

flu season, and combining efforts on a corporate or community project.

To compete effectively, leaders must fashion a network of skilled employees who support each other in the achievement of corporate goals and the delivery of seamless service.

23) Collaboration at Work

Have you ever noticed how your perceptions and those of others often don't match?

It is said that we all hold "a piece of the elephant" (and the elephant likes it). This is why collaboration is necessary and usually advantageous at work: to gain access to unfamiliar territory and the new resources that live in other people. Indeed, to get things done, learn, and improve, your colleagues - yes, even your boss -

Look Within, or Look Out!

Reflect for a moment on your own workplace. When was the last time you had a conversation that didn't go well? Do you normally come back to those less-than-delightful moments to gain a sense of resolution? How, usually? Do you resolve it inside your own head or do you get in their face? Where there's been some interpersonal friction, people naturally tend toward one extreme or the other to cover up the fact that we

could come in handy from time to time.

Collaboration is more than just working together *cooperatively* ("teamwork"), more than going along (accommodating) or getting along ... it is that remarkable and unpredictable chaos, complexity and creative stuff that makes life interesting. Admittedly, sometimes *too* interesting...

feel either threatened or embarrassed.

Even if you attempt resolution inside your own head ("Oh, he's just a jerk!"), or through a third party ("Can you believe what a jerk he is?!"), or *with* the person directly ("I'm sorry, but I don't feel complete about X; perhaps there's been a misunderstanding."), you aren't *necessarily* collaborating.

When does it make sense to collaborate? There are at least four situations where a collaborative approach is essential:

- ◆ **When you need to increase cooperation** - collaboration helps deal with differences *before* they lead to resistance or begin to prevent understanding.
 - Skills: handling resistance, empathic listening and verifying understanding.
- ◆ **When you want stewardship (not micro-delegation or micro-management)** - whether kicking off an important project or change initiative, stewards "go slow to go fast" with the right input from all the right players up front.

- Skills: asking goal-oriented questions, forming clear & complete agreements, rapport.
- ◆ **When you need a more complete perspective** - collaboration allows for useful feedback, so rather than hallucinating (filling in blind spots from your own perceptions), you can push back on limited assumptions and gain new awareness.
 - Skills: distinguishing observation from interpretation, giving feedback and recognition, rapport.
- ◆ **When there has been a breakdown or problem with another person** - collaboration provides the most tactful way of building accountability, trust and safety, while bringing about lasting change.
 - Skills: Dealing with negativity and blame, establishing accountability, and using the gentle art of confrontation.

For these four, there would typically be a consequence to *not* collaborating. For example, when there's a breakdown and the pathway starts getting cluttered by the debris of stormy interpersonal weather, take time out to clear it. A cooling off period is wise, but don't postpone collaboration indefinitely or what was once merely cool will soon turn frozen and immovable as a "hardening of the attitudes" sets in. Then you'll need that elephant or other power tools to drag away the heavy interpersonal roadblocks.

And if you still have strong feelings, it may be helpful to work it out

human to human rather than through electronic (or animal) means. Email and voicemail have their place, but it is too easy to misunderstand intent without a "live," interactive conversation. It is nearly impossible for others to accurately "read" your voice tone and body language in email or voicemail.

Keeping "current" in relationship - no accumulation of serious withholds or violations of trust - and skillful communication happen to be a key to effective, high-quality collaboration and teamwork.

Staff wellness

“Choose a job you like and you will never have to work a day in your life.”

Confucius

24) How to Get Work-life Balance

What is work-life balance?

Work-life balance is a self-defined measure of success which is determined by each individual. The highest outcome is that the individual can manage effectively multiple responsibilities in their wheel of satisfaction, which then leads to fulfillment. The wheel of satisfaction includes such components as physical, emotional, family, community, life purpose,

relationships, and financial and personal growth areas. The intention is that satisfaction is reached in each of the components at a level that is self determined by each individual. The underlying feeling is that required as a result of one of feeling good at the end of the day, end of the week and end of the year. The highest outcome will not cause any new problems or negative impact.

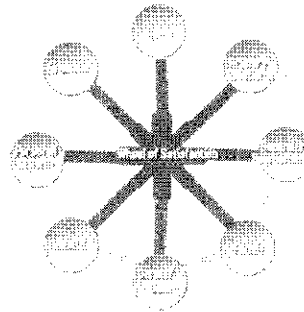
How do you know when you've got work-life balance?

Individuals who experience balance are satisfied with their work and home lives, are able to fulfill their multiple responsibilities at home, work and in the community without being sorry. They are healthy

physically, emotionally, and socially, have a sense of peace, calm and clarity in their life, and feel that the decisions they make are informed choices as opposed to forced compromises.

How do you know when you don't?

You know you've got imbalance when you're constantly tired, feeling like you're running uphill all the time and seemingly getting nowhere or when you feel like you are not at choice or are stuck in a dilemma. In a place of imbalance, you feel life is happening to you instead of you creating your life. When you can think of more things that are not getting done or that you are unsatisfied with than those that you have accomplished or are actively working towards. In other words you see more negative in your life than



positive. You might also be tired, unmotivated, get sick more than usual. You might also make poor choices for food, not resourcefully retain your relationships or make the best decisions for yourself.

How do I work to achieve balance for myself?

On the journey to achieving the work life, family life, and personal life we want, there are steps we can take to become aware of our current situation vs. where we want to be.

Steps include: Taking a wheel of satisfaction assessment to determine your current satisfaction in all the different areas of life, identifying your life's purpose; your destiny, cause and calling, identifying meaningful objectives and personal values then aligning yourself with actions and behaviors that support those objectives and selectively eliminating things that do not support your objectives or that impede your progress.

Goals and desired outcomes should directly connect you to your bigger game in life and through the active participation in achieving and succeeding in your different life areas will lead to a more fulfilling life.

That is not to say that each day is completely balanced, that would be boring path to walk. But over time, when you pay attention to each of the areas of your life, the focus you give will have a similar level of satisfaction. You may find one day your passion and purpose will be stronger in one of the areas, but

overall there is an equal opportunity to focus in each of the life areas. The key is finding the level of commitment that fits your own definition of success. This is unique to each individual, and is not a one size fits all solution.

One of the best ways of determining this is to work with a coach on the topic of life fulfillment so you have identified all the paving stones on your own individual path and then help them you align them with the commitments of work, home and community.

Work-life balance is essentially about handling real life. It's the ability to effectively manage the work, family and personal components of life without suffering extreme stress or any one are being negatively impacted.

Some companies offer programs and services which are designed to nurture the wellbeing of their employees and enable them to achieve a balance between their jobs, families and personal lives. However, many companies do not offer such programs and it's up to the individual to achieve this balance for themselves.

Employee benefits of achieving work-life balance:

- ◆ Improves job (and overall life) satisfaction
- ◆ Alleviates on-the-job stress
- ◆ Improves self esteem
- ◆ Builds stronger families
- ◆ Assists with the management of work and family responsibilities
- ◆ Allows parents to be more involved in their children's lives
- ◆ Promotes commitment to activities outside of work, for example sport or community activities

Employer benefits of achieving work-life balance:

- ◆ Improves job satisfaction, commitment and retention
- ◆ Decreases absenteeism
- ◆ Increases job performance and productivity
- ◆ Lessens feelings of anger and resentment
- ◆ Improves accountability
- ◆ Increases employee engagement

Indicators you have a healthy work-life balance:

You feel satisfied overall with your work and personal life, feel physically and emotionally healthy, and have a sense of control over your

life. You have a social life whilst still being able to fulfill responsibilities at home, at work and in your community.

Indicators you don't have work-life balance:

You notice that you're spending more time at work and you've increased your work hours to "catch up". Your family and friends make comments that they rarely see you and you feel

constantly tired, pressured, or that you're losing control of your circumstances. You see more negatives than positives in your life.

How to begin a better work-life balance:

- ◆ Firstly recognise where you're at, how you're feeling, and whether your life is lacking balance.
- ◆ Identify attainable short-term goals that will bring more satisfaction into your life.
- ◆ Do not attempt to "go it alone". You need the support of your family, friends, community and workplace.

25) Safety in the Workplace

All occupations entail an element of risk. Dependent on your workplace type, risks may include paper cuts to fatalities caused by faulty or incorrect use of machinery.

There are simple steps employers can take in order to ensure that the

workplace is safe for employees. Taking these steps also ensures that the legal duty of care that an employer has towards employees is met. Safety in the workplace can be coordinated by the human resources department or a Workplace Health and Safety committee, if one is in existence.

Undertake regular checks of the workplace environment for hazards

On a regular basis (from monthly to 3 monthly) depending on the workplace environment, undertake a physical check of the entirety of the workplace, looking for potential hazards. This safety audit should look for possible hazards including:

- ◆ Equipment not working correctly
- ◆ Frayed cords
- ◆ Slip and fall hazards
- ◆ Quiet spots where employees can't be seen and therefore cannot get help if ill or injured.

A tool to assist you in undertaking this check is a safety audit checklist, available for download from the

internet. These checklists assist you in identifying the hazards which may exist in your workplace.

Job Hazard Analysis

As well as checking for hazards that may be present in your workplace, you should also undertake a job

hazard analysis for each employee. A job hazard analysis will investigate:

- ◆ the physical hazards the employee may face;
- ◆ the employee's attitudes towards safe work;
- ◆ whether personal protective equipment (PPE) is being used; and
- ◆ whether the employee has the skills and tools to work in a safe manner.

From the job hazard analysis the employer can determine whether a job requires additional resources in terms of human hours, tools or personal protective equipment in order to be safe or whether the worker should be physically removed

Safety Training

As part of the induction process, all new employees should undergo workplace health and safety training. At a minimum this should cover items such as who are the dedicated first aiders in the organization, where fire exits are and what procedures relating to fire and other mass building evacuations exist and who to report their concerns to about unsafe work environment or practices. Other items to be covered can include the use of personal protective equipment, stress management, how to avoid repetitive strain injury and safe lifting and ergonomic practices.

from the site and placed in a more appropriate site in the workplace. Also, an employee may require training or performance counseling in order to understand the importance of safety in the workplace and their role in ensuring their own safety.

It is also a good practice for all employees to undergo safety training refreshers on a yearly basis.

Workplace health and safety is the responsibility of both employer and employee. Following simple steps, such as regular safety audits, job hazard audits, safety training and encouraging a workplace environment that values safe work practices will hopefully lead to employees being accident free and a potential lower workers' compensation premium for the employer.

26) Stress Management

How to Reduce, prevent, and Cope with Stress

It may seem that there's nothing you can do about your stress level. The bills aren't going to stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day for all your errands, and your career or family responsibilities will always be demanding. But you have a lot more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you're in control of your life is the foundation of stress management.

Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun – plus the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on.

Identify the sources of stress in your life

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life. This isn't as easy as it sounds. Your true sources of stress aren't always obvious, and it's all too easy to overlook your own stress-inducing thoughts, feelings, and To identify your true sources of stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses:

behaviors. Sure, you may know that you're constantly worried about work deadlines. But maybe it's your procrastination, rather than the actual job demands, that leads to deadline stress.

- ◆ Do you explain away stress as temporary (“I just have a million things going on right now”) even though you can't remember the last time you took a breather?
- ◆ Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life (“Things are always crazy around here”) or as a part of your personality (“I have a lot of nervous energy, that's all”)?
- ◆ Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?

Until you accept responsibility for the role you play in creating or maintaining it, your stress level will remain outside your control.

the way you deal with them. Each time you feel stressed, keep track of it in your journal. As you keep a daily log, you will begin to see patterns and common themes. Write down:

A stress journal can help you identify the regular stressors in your life and

- ◆ What caused your stress (make a guess if you're unsure).

- ◆ How you felt, both physically and emotionally.
- ◆ How you acted in response.
- ◆ What you did to make yourself feel better.

Look at how you currently cope with stress

Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. Your stress journal can help you identify them. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy,

helpful or unproductive? Unfortunately, many people cope with stress in ways that compound the problem.

Unhealthy ways of coping with stress

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much
- Overeating or undereating
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

Learning healthier ways to manage stress

If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it's time to find healthier ones. There are many healthy ways to manage and cope with stress, but they all require change. You can either change the situation or change your reaction. When deciding which option to choose, it's helpful to think of the four As: avoid, alter, adapt, or accept.

Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no "one size fits all" solution to managing it. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

Dealing with Stressful Situations: The Four A's

Change the situation:

- Avoid the stressor.
- Alter the stressor.

Change your reaction:

- Adapt to the stressor.
- Accept the stressor.

Stress management strategy #1: Avoid unnecessary stress

Not all stress can be avoided, and it's not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed. You may be surprised, however, by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

- ◆ **Learn how to say “no”** – Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, refuse to accept added responsibilities when you're close to reaching them. Taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.
- ◆ **Avoid people who stress you out** – If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can't turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.
- ◆ **Take control of your environment** – If the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic's got you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.
- ◆ **Avoid hot-button topics** – If you get upset over religion or politics, cross them off your conversation list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it's the topic of discussion.
- ◆ **Pare down your to-do list** – Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the “shoulds” and the “musts.” Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

Stress management strategy #2: Alter the situation

If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Figure out what you can do to change things so the problem doesn't present itself in the future. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

- ◆ **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will likely remain the same.

- ◆ **Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.
- ◆ **Be more assertive.** Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them. If you've got an exam to study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk.
- ◆ **Manage your time better.** Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused. But if you plan ahead and make sure you don't overextend yourself, you can alter the amount of stress you're under.

Stress management strategy #3: Adapt to the stressor

If you can't change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

- ◆ **Reframe problems.** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.
- ◆ **Look at the big picture.** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- ◆ **Adjust your standards.** Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with "good enough."
- ◆ **Focus on the positive.** When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

Adjusting Your Attitude

How you think can have a profound affect on your emotional and physical well-being. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation. If you see good things about yourself, you are

more likely to feel good; the reverse is also true. Eliminate words such as "always," "never," "should," and "must." These are telltale marks of self-defeating thoughts.

Stress management strategy #4: Accept the things you can't change

Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the

best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.

- ◆ **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control— particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- ◆ **Look for the upside.** As the saying goes, "What doesn't kill us makes us stronger." When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.
- ◆ **Share your feelings.** Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.
- ◆ **Learn to forgive.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

Stress management strategy #5: Make time for fun and relaxation

Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. If you regularly make time

for fun and relaxation, you'll be in a better place to handle life's stressors when they inevitably come.

Healthy ways to relax and recharge

- Go for a walk.
- Spend time in nature.
- Call a good friend.
- Sweat out tension with a good workout.
- Write in your journal.
- Take a long bath.
- Light scented candles
- Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea.
- Play with a pet.
- Work in your garden.
- Get a massage.
- Curl up with a good book.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a comedy

Don't get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.

- ◆ **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- ◆ **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.
- ◆ **Do something you enjoy every day.** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.

- ◆ **Keep your sense of humor.** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

You can control your stress levels with relaxation techniques that evoke the body's relaxation response, a state of restfulness that is the opposite of the stress response. Regularly

practicing these techniques will build your physical and emotional resilience, heal your body, and boost your overall feelings of joy and equanimity.

Stress management strategy #6: Adopt a healthy lifestyle

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.

- ◆ **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.
- ◆ **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- ◆ **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and you'll sleep better.
- ◆ **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don't avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.

- ◆ **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

27) Managing Workplace Stress:

Work Overload + High Demands + Low Control = Unfulfilled Goals

Work overload, high demands, and low control often result in unfulfilled goals. Translation: *STRESS*. And since most of the time we cannot change these stressors, such as an emergency meeting called by a client

or boss, it is essential to learn how to manage the way we respond to workplace stress. These three proactive stress busters have become essential tools in my stress management toolbox.

Stress Buster One: Neutralize Work Overload with Small Victories

When we are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work overload, we often become paralyzed. We need rejuvenation.

Last May a participant in one of my workshops shared how for the last twelve years he had a 1962 Thunderbird in his garage—in pieces. He had wanted to restore this car, but the job seemed overwhelming. Last

January he placed a white board in his garage and determined not to go to bed until he could write a completed task on that white board. The task could be as simple as "polish a headlight." He announced to the class that in only five months the car was almost done. Breaking the project down so that we can achieve small victories makes the overload manageable.

Stress Buster Two: Regain Control with Routines

Routines stabilize my life. They are the proactive, disciplined rituals that produce balance, harmony and a sense of control.

What are your lunch routines? The average manager spends fifteen minutes a day for lunch in front of the computer—working. This is not a proactive way to gain control. Recently I was working with production supervisors who are under

the constant pressure of a high quality production schedule. They have

recently started spending their lunch time playing dominos together. They have a rule that they cannot talk about work, and when lunch is over they all go back to their projects with a new perspective and energy. Some managers work out at the gym, go for a walk, run, or go out to lunch with some friends. I recently heard about a group of emergency room residents that used their 15-minute breaks to have foot-races up the stairwells. They went back to a high stress

environment laughing and feeling good.

People can choose to control the following areas of their lives: nutrition, breaks (i.e. lunch), exercise, spirituality, planning, sleep, and even commuting. Commuting seems out of control because I'm trying to schedule a one-hour commute in 45

Stress Buster Three: Just Do It

Unfulfilled goals are a silent stressor. For years my first book was in my mind, but not on paper. I read that James A. Michener claimed that many of his neighbors were better writers than he. The difference, however, was that he wrote and they didn't. He would get up each morning and write for at least four hours, often throwing away over 80% of what he wrote. I got the point and realized that I needed to quit thinking about writing and just start writing. It made all the difference. Spending a few

minutes. However, listening to audiotapes during a commute, or reading the newspaper on light-rail puts me in control.

Establish disciplined routines in these areas and you will not only feel better physically, but also feel like your life has rhythm and healing.

hours week writing, I soon had the first book ready for press.

When I am stressed because of high demand and low control, I need to take this advice:

Neutralize work overload with small victories

Develop healthy, disciplined rituals

And, Just do it

28) Get A Life! – Life Work Balance

*"You Can't Love Your Life
If You Hate Your Work"*

The average person spends over 100,000 working hours in a lifetime (40 hours a week, 50 hours a week for 50 years). A recent Wall Street Journal/ABC News poll reported that of Americans would choose a new line of work if they had the chance.

The obvious questions are: "Why would people spend 100,000 hours doing something they don't find satisfying," and "What is holding them back from a change?"

To enjoy our lives, we need to get a life by making one of two choices

The first option is to "Be There"

Have you seen the bumper sticker, "The World is Run by Those Who Show Up." I often start our workshops by asking the questions, "Where are you today?" "Are you here?" Recently one man said, "My teenage daughter is having her first date today---I'm not totally here." Another said, "My house is supposed to close escrow today, "I'm not totally here." After listening to the places people are in their mind, I ask them to make a commitment to "be here." And try to be totally focused in the day's activities, stressing it is a great lesson for life. To enjoy the day, the job, the assignment, the project, we need to "be there." We focus so much on multitasking, we have the tendency to be everywhere but where we ought to be. It's a choice. We can make a decision every moment we are with customer, co-worker,

project, or boss. We either need to be there, or get out.

Tom Hanks, a former student at California State University Sacramento, is a local celebrity and inspiration for many Sacramento Theater Arts students. Recently I was facilitating a faculty retreat with the Theater Arts Department at the University where Tom Hanks use to study and perform. Faculty members were talking about students who have become so involved in "acting" that they refuse to degrade themselves with lowlier positions like painting sets and working the lights. "We are actors," they respond when instructors attempt to recruit volunteers to help with set design and construction. One professor loves to tell how Tom Hanks painted sets, ran the lights and worked in costumes

when he was a student. He was willing to do anything. He was totally

"there" no matter what the task. No wonder he is successful.

The second option is to "Look for Trouble"

The fiery Zorba the Greek says, "Life is trouble. Only death is not. To be alive means to buckle our belt and look for trouble." But that means change and change--even change meant to improve our lives--creates stress. That's why we avoid new experiences and tough choices. If we decided we do not want to "be there" in our present vocation, then we need to "get out". The ultimate tragedy, as Oliver Wendell Homes has said, is that many people go to their graves with the music still in them. We have a song, dream, and vision in our hearts, but we have never acted on it. We choose to live in a dream world and never take the step to change. Some of the saddest phrases in the English language are "if only," or "it

might have been." Many people use these phrases because they can't take the first step. They are paralyzed by fear.

Today we have so many career options. Most people spend far more time planning the purchase of a new car or planning their vacations than they do thinking about what they really want to do with their lives.

We have two choices: We can choose to "be there" and become passionate about our job, or we can choose to "get out". As John Henry Newman says, "Fear not that your life shall come to an end, but that it shall never have a beginning. You have the choice.

Client Orientation

***"Treat every customer as if they sign
your paycheck...because they do."***

29) Successful Handling of Customer Service Issues

Customer service complaints are a part of the territory when you deal with the public. There are many reasons why you may receive a complaint; but in the final analysis, the reasons inevitably involve an unreasonable expectation of some sort or some type of miscommunication. Customer service issues can be successfully resolved if you employ the tips outlined in this article, which allows you to stop, look, listen then act with effective consequences.

Stop and let the customer tell you in his or her own words the problem, as they perceive it. Observe the emotions and attitudes being exhibited as well as the environment and surrounding. Actively listen to understand and make the customer feel heard and respected. With these factors included in your mind-set and thinking, you can proceed to act in effectively handling the problem, with the results being a satisfied loyal customer.

Five tips to helping you bring successful resolution to customer service issues.

- ◆ Actively Listen
- ◆ Clarify to get understanding
- ◆ Acknowledge something happen
- ◆ Resolve it
- ◆ Advance the relationship forward

Listening allows you to understand the matter from the customer's perspective, right or wrong.

You get to share their thoughts, feeling, emotions and possibly have them even recommend a feasible resolution, without charge. In many cases this is all that is required to bring a successful resolution to some situations. There was a simply misunderstanding on someone part. The customer or sales associate allowed their emotions or irrational reasoning to guide their judgment, so tension was created or it somehow became personal verses staying in the business arena. It is now on your desk and you have to resolve it in the best

interest of the customer and company.

Treat your customers with respect; listening is an excellent example of showing your concern, compassion and respect.

The customer will perceive that you and your company care when you take the time to listen to their concern. In some instances it will be a legitimate issue your company needs to address. In other cases, it maybe the wrong day, the wrong time, or the wrong people! Just like

mixing fuel with flames, an accident waiting to happen.

Listening to your customer gives them an opportunity to release some steam and get the heat off their chest.

After the customer has had an opportunity to vent, it can become a no harm, no foul situation or let us just forgive and possibly forget, then move on with our lives! Learn from

the experience as a business and company. Once a mutual solution is reached, everyone usually feels better for the experience. The act of listening will allow you to take inventory of the way you do business and possibly clear up some policies or procedures that are outdated or could be deemed confusing and/ or misleading.

Clarifying the issues gives you an opportunity to understand the problem and factors that lead to the matter being an issue that requires your attention.

Think about it for a moment, how or why would you fix something you didn't know or think was wrong or broken. Investing time and patience to understand the problem and factors that created the problem is time well

spent. This is your chance to right a wrong or lay the foundation for building a lifetime relationship. You need to be clear of the issues before you can intelligently act on the matter.

Next, acknowledge there is an issue.

This is not a time to point blame. It makes no difference whose fault it was. Something is broken! You have to fix it. If you haven't acknowledged anything being wrong, why are you encouraged to correct anything? Point being, you would not be face to face or in a communication fist-ti-cuff

(whether verbal or written) if everything was hunky-dory. There is a problem, and it needs your attention. Once you acknowledge it you can then determine what level of management to direct the matter for resolution.

In many cases the customer will have already told you how they want to see the problem handled.

As earlier stated, the matter could be as simple as one created by a misunderstanding in communications or an unreasonable expectations from the customer. A simple apology, shake hands and everyone walks away with the problem solved.

I'm not an advocate of retaining all of my customers. A very small percent of customers in the marketplace are mean, rude and/ or criminal. Some customers maintain a nothing will ever please them attitude. Others are intent on ripping you off from the moment they walk through your

doors or click on your website. They only bought your product or service to use it and refund it, criminal behavior at it finest!

This being said, the vast majority of customers are honest and reasonable people. Without them there would be no reason to be in business. Your mission statement should include existing, as a business to serve your customers wants needs and desires. This attitude will allow you to seek resolutions that are perceived as reasonable and equitable in your customer's eyesight. It also allows you to maximize the revenue potential of the relationship and not get blinded by the glitter of pennies. Penny-wise and pound-foolish is not a good revenue model for long-term business success.

Some customer relationships need to be ended before they begin. DBA, Dead Before Arrival. It is best for all parties if you never meet to do

Finally, remember it cost 5 - 10 times more to get a new customer than to retain an existing client.

A loyal customer is likely to refer others to your product or service for years to come. With that said, you can see why it would be logical to work to advance the relationship forward in successfully resolving customer service issues. The proof of

Bonus points!

The client is happy and tells their friends and associates that your company has integrity and value their business. All because of five simple

business. You don't like them, they don't like you, and it is not a good fit for either party. One excellent reason to end these toxic relationships early is they can literally suck your energy and time, which will take away creatively juices from other areas of your business. Look at the long-term impact to your company and make adjustments for the grief you will experience in accepting business from this category of customers.

There are some dollars and some customers your business could do better without. The costs don't justify the benefits. Then there are those times when you have to make a decision that is in the best interest of the customer, company and future business relationships. It is so very important to understand the lifetime value of your customer to be able to apply this last tip with sound judgment. It is a skill to knowing when to hold'em and when to fold'em

the pudding is in the tasting; there was an issue, it got out of control and created a mess between your company and the client. You step up to the plate and make the client feel important, whole and respected.

techniques that demonstrate you care: Listen. Clarify. Acknowledge. Resolve and Advance.

Bottom-line

Remember you are dealing with another human being. Somewhere there was a breakdown in communications or they failed to get what they expected. Either way, be willing to listen to them; understand the issues involved; recommend viable solutions that benefit all parties and work to move your relationship

with the customer to an even higher level in your clients mind. Your customer's perception is their reality, it must be changed or bad-will will continue to persist. The next time a customer complains, remember this could be a wonderful opportunity to make a new friend along with a loyal customer.

Management & Leadership

“Leaders grow; they are not made.”

30) Managing Meetings Effectively

Meeting management tends to be a set of skills often overlooked by leaders and managers. The following information is a rather "Cadillac" version of meeting management suggestions. The reader might pick which suggestions best fits the particular culture of their own organization. Keep in mind that meetings are very expensive activities when one considers the cost of labor for the meeting and how much can or cannot get done in them. So take meeting management very seriously. The process used in a meeting depends on the kind of meeting you

plan to have, e.g., staff meeting, planning meeting, problem solving meeting, etc. However, there are certain basics that are common to various types of meetings. These basics are described below.

(Note that there may seem to be a lot of suggestions listed below for something as apparently simple as having a meeting. However, any important activity would include a long list of suggestions. The list seems to become much smaller once you master how to conduct the activity.)

Selecting Participants

- ◆ The decision about who is to attend depends on what you want to accomplish in the meeting. This may seem too obvious to state, but it's surprising how many meetings occur without the right people there.
- ◆ Don't depend on your own judgment about who should come. Ask several other people for their opinion as well.
- ◆ If possible, call each person to tell them about the meeting, it's overall purpose and why their attendance is important.
- ◆ Follow-up your call with a meeting notice, including the purpose of the meeting, where it will be held and when, the list of participants and whom to contact if they have questions.
- ◆ Send out a copy of the proposed agenda along with the meeting notice.
- ◆ Have someone designated to record important actions, assignments and due dates during the meeting. This person should ensure that this information is distributed to all participants shortly after the meeting.

Developing Agendas

- ◆ Develop the agenda together with key participants in the meeting. Think of what overall outcome you want from the meeting and what activities need to occur to reach that outcome. The agenda should be organized so that these activities are conducted during the meeting.

- ◆ In the agenda, state the overall outcome that you want from the meeting
- ◆ Design the agenda so that participants get involved early by having something for them to do right away and so they come on time.
- ◆ Next to each major topic, include the type of action needed, the type of output expected (decision, vote, action assigned to someone), and time estimates for addressing each topic.
- ◆ Ask participants if they'll commit to the agenda.
- ◆ Keep the agenda posted at all times.
- ◆ Don't overly design meetings; be willing to adapt the meeting agenda if members are making progress in the planning process.
- ◆ Think about how you label an event, so people come in with that mindset; it may pay to have a short dialogue around the label to develop a common mindset among attendees, particularly if they include representatives from various cultures.

Opening Meetings

- ◆ Always start on time; this respects those who showed up on time and reminds late-comers that the scheduling is serious.
- ◆ Welcome attendees and thank them for their time.
- ◆ Review the agenda at the beginning of each meeting, giving participants a chance to understand all proposed major topics, change them and accept them.
- ◆ Note that a meeting recorder if used will take minutes and provide them back to each participant shortly after the meeting.
- ◆ Model the kind of energy and participant needed by meeting participants.
- ◆ Clarify your role(s) in the meeting.

Establishing Ground Rules for Meetings

You don't need to develop new ground rules each time you have a meeting, surely. However, it pays to have a few basic ground rules that can be used for most of your meetings. These ground rules cultivate the basic ingredients needed for a successful meeting.

- Four powerful ground rules are: participate, get focus, maintain momentum and reach closure. (You may want a ground rule about confidentiality.)
- List your primary ground rules on the agenda. If you have new attendees who are not used to your meetings, you might review *each* ground rule.
- Keep the ground rules posted at all times.

Time Management

- ◆ One of the most difficult facilitation tasks is time management -- time seems to run out before tasks are completed. Therefore, the biggest challenge is keeping momentum to keep the process moving.
- ◆ You might ask attendees to help you keep track of the time.
- ◆ If the planned time on the agenda is getting out of hand, present it to the group and ask for their input as to a resolution.

Evaluations of Meeting Process

- ◆ It's amazing how often people will complain about a meeting being a complete waste of time -- but they only say so after the meeting. Get their feedback during the meeting when you can improve the meeting process right away. Evaluating a meeting only at the end of the meeting is usually too late to do anything about participants' feedback.
- ◆ Every couple of hours, conduct 5-10 minutes "satisfaction checks".
- ◆ In a round-table approach, quickly have each participant indicate how they think the meeting is going.

Evaluating the Overall Meeting

- ◆ Leave 5-10 minutes at the end of the meeting to evaluate the meeting; don't skip this portion of the meeting.
- ◆ Have each member rank the meeting from 1-5, with 5 as the highest, and have each member explain their ranking
- ◆ Have the chief executive rank the meeting last.

Closing Meetings

- ◆ Always end meetings on time and attempt to end on a positive note.
- ◆ At the end of a meeting, review actions and assignments, and set the time for the next meeting and ask each person if they can make it or not (to get their commitment)
- ◆ Clarify that meeting minutes and/or actions will be reported back to members in at most a week (this helps to keep momentum going).

Meetings are one of the most vital elements of any business, so getting the most out of meetings is of great value. So many people quote boring, unproductive meetings as being a 'waste of time', that some sense of it all is needed. Managing meetings effectively will

help you make the best use of yours and everyone else's time, whilst acknowledging the tremendous value of utilising those real opportunities where people get together in a generative, growth focused way.

Simple Actions You Can Take Today!

1. Consider the meetings you took part in during the last week. Being really honest, how productive were they on a scale of 1 to 10. What would a meeting with a score of 3 better have been like?
2. What can you do in preparation of the next meeting you are involved in, to make it work better? Come on, get up and be the source of change!
3. Consider the behaviours in the meetings you are part of. How do you personally behave? Compare your contribution to others present. What can you do differently and how will you get this embedded deeply.
4. In your next meeting, observe carefully where things start to go wrong - if they do. Where does the responsibility for the meeting lie on this occasion?
5. Who gets involved in your meetings - and who doesn't? Be really focused about the value each gets from being there. Be prepared to exclude others - and be careful and generous with how you let people down.
6. What outcome would be the best possible from the meetings you go to, to really make a difference? What need for movement and progress is everyone aware of?
7. Would you benefit from more or less meetings next week? Consider what you could do with the extra time. How do you balance the added extra time with the loss of meeting value.

8. Ensure that everyone is clear of what is expected of them and by when, as they leave the meeting. Get minutes out as soon as you can to ensure everyone is really clear.
9. How do you 'park' issues that come up that are not relevant to the meeting? What is the process for acknowledging the real issues people face - but at some other time please.
10. Review each meeting you go to and look deeply at what went well, and what might have gone better - what can you change yourself to make things run more effectively?

31) Change and Employees' Involvement

Employee involvement is creating an environment in which people have an impact on decisions and actions that affect their jobs.

Employee involvement is not the goal nor is it a tool, as practiced in many organizations. Rather, it is a management and leadership philosophy about how people are most enabled to contribute to continuous improvement and the ongoing success of their work organization.

My bias, from working with people for 40+ years, is to involve people as much as possible in all aspects of work decisions and planning. This involvement increases ownership and commitment, retains your best employees, and fosters an

environment in which people choose to be motivated and contributing.

How to involve employees in decision making and continuous improvement activities is the strategic aspect of involvement and can include such methods as suggestion systems, manufacturing cells, work teams, continuous improvement meetings, Kaizen (continuous improvement) events, corrective action processes, and periodic discussions with the supervisor.

Intrinsic to most employee involvement processes is training in team effectiveness, communication, and problem solving; the development of reward and recognition systems; and frequently, the sharing of gains made through employee involvement efforts.

Employee Involvement Model

For people and organizations who desire a model to apply, the best I have discovered was developed from work by Fannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) and Sadler (1970). They provide a continuum for leadership

and involvement that includes an increasing role for employees and a decreasing role for supervisors in the decision process. The continuum includes this progression.

- ◆ **Tell:** the supervisor makes the decision and announces it to staff. The supervisor provides complete direction.
- ◆ **Sell:** the supervisor makes the decision and then attempts to gain commitment from staff by "selling" the positive aspects of the decision.
- ◆ **Consult:** the supervisor invites input into a decision while retaining authority to make the final decision herself.

- ♦ **Join:** the supervisor invites employees to make the decision with the supervisor. The supervisor considers her voice equal in the decision process.

To round out the model, I add the following.

- ♦ **Delegate:** the supervisor turns the decision over to another party.

Employee Satisfaction Research

In a study, *The Impact of Perceptions of Leadership Style, Use of Power, and Conflict Management Style on Organizational Outcomes* by Virginia P. Richmond, John P. Wagner, and James McCroskey, the researchers developed an instrument to measure employee satisfaction using this continuum (tell, sell, consult, join).

Their research discovered that, "the supervisor who wishes to generate positive impact on satisfaction with supervision, satisfaction with work, and solidarity and to reduce communication anxiety should strive to get her/his subordinates to perceive her/him as using a more employee-centered (consult-join) leadership style." At the same time, however, the supervisor cannot be seen by employees as abdicating responsibility for decision making.

The authors further concluded, "we believe there is a relatively straightforward explanation of this finding. Leadership styles which approach the employee-centered (join) end of the continuum greatly increase the degree to which subordinates are asked to participate in making decisions and/or make the decision themselves. When this

approach becomes excessive, the supervisor may be seen as abdicating her/his responsibilities-the laissez faire leader-or even deserting the subordinate.

The subordinate may feel that they are given more responsibility than their positions should require and, thus, are overworked or underpaid for the work expected. Such reactions could be expected to be reflected in negative outcomes of the type observed in this study. We conclude, therefore, that while the supervisor should attempt to be perceived as employing an employee-centered leadership style (consult-join), he/she must maintain a supervisory role and avoid being perceived as abdicating responsibility."

32) Embracing Change

Change is often very difficult for people to accept and yet it's happening every minute. The only thing certain is change.

When you find that things are not as you want them to be in your life, it's time to get comfortable with change.

The Comfort Zone

Change means many things to people. It means stepping beyond the comfort zone and into the unknown. The comfort zone is that place where you are accustomed - it may or may not actually be comfortable; you can be miserable but avoid change because at least you know what to expect within the confines of where you are now.

In order to transform, you need to be willing to take a chance to learn something new. You need to be open to possibilities other than what you are accustomed and know that you will grow and become stronger in the process. This new learning experience will expand your comfort zone offering you increased personal freedom.

Change

What does change mean to you? How do you cope when placed in a situation where something needs to change - and that something is you? Change isn't bad. In fact, usually, the change results in better things. Often the fear of change is really the fear of not knowing what's around the other side of the change.

If change connotes fear for you, start noticing how the fear impacts you. Recognizing the fear - where it comes from and what it feels like - is an important part of moving forward. Embrace the feeling; don't ignore it. But as you embrace it, ask yourself how the fear serves you? What is it you're really afraid of?

starts with accepting responsibility for where you are right now, knowing that you have the ability to take your life from where it is and create what you really want. Responsibility starts with an increased awareness of the way things are and the way you are. Not the way you think things are but the way they really are. Two things are required for initiating change: openness and willingness - openness to a deeper understanding of what is possible and a willingness to let go of the way it is and what has come before. In order to transform, you must focus on the vision you hold for the future instead of how it has been in the past or even where it is today. It means getting clear about what you want and the vision you see for

Change means responsibility. Change

yourself, then making a commitment to make it happen.

Change also means excitement, challenge, and opportunity. Being open for possibilities opens the door to creating a life beyond what you can think of today. It means that there are no limits to how wonderful life can become if you are open to receive that which the world has to offer. Keep the focus on what you want your life to look like and stop putting

up with people or things that get in the way of your dream. Identify the source of those obstacles and eliminate them. Remember, you are responsible for your life and it's course. Stop getting in your own way! Right now, this minute, you have the power to change your life. Make the commitment to no longer accept mediocrity and you have taken the first step.

Moving Forward

Initiating change can be done in small increments - a small shift in thinking, attitude, and/or actions can create dramatic results in helping you change the course of your life. Believe that you can create a better life and visualize yourself there. What will it feel like on your new path? What you think about most of the time, you bring about. You can choose what you think about. Don't focus on what has to change, rather think about what it is you want - that vision you have for your future - and you will naturally move in that direction. Immerse yourself in thinking about your new vision. Create a picture, collage, or write

about your vision and post it where you can see it regularly.

Some changes are inevitable, like the changing of the seasons and the passing of time. You have a choice over how you experience these events. You can perceive them as a rich part of the wonders of life or as an unfortunate interruption of your routine. People who have difficulty accepting the passing of the years are often the ones who are not fully living. It is from this lack that they fear the loss of time. And yet, they have the power to choose a different experience.

Getting Ready

What needs to happen for you to be ready to change course in life? What lessons are presenting them to you right now that you must learn in order to move forward? What needs to happen for you to accept responsibility for creating and

embarking on a new path? Be honest about where you are and where you want to be. Years have a way of slipping by. If you are not ready now, then identify what you need to learn in order to move forward. Wake up! Your life is waiting.

33) Personal Courage and Conflict Resolution at Work

Practicing personal courage is necessary if you want to really resolve conflicts at work. It is much easier and much safer to ignore the necessary conflict and play ostrich. Unfortunately, unresolved conflict tends to escalate. It never really disappears because it simmers just below the surface. Think of water that is coming to a boil. It bubbles up in the pot sporadically and then finally reaches the boiling temperature. At that point, a full blown rolling, constant boiling is seen on the surface of the water.

Conflict behaves similarly. The water may seem calm, but every once in awhile, usually at the worst possible

times, the conflict bubbles up to the surface once again. Unresolved conflict does not go away; unresolved conflict can turn into a full boil at any time.

Many people are afraid of conflict resolution. They feel threatened by conflict resolution because they may not get what they want if the other party gets what they want. Even in the best circumstances, conflict resolution is uncomfortable because people are usually unskilled at conflict resolution. Finally, people can get hurt in a conflict and, at work; they are still expected to work together effectively every day.

The Benefits of Conflict Resolution

This century's workplace makes conflict resolution more important, but also, more difficult. Team or work cell environments create more conflict as people with different opinions must choose to work together, often in close quarters.

Empowering work environments, in which the traditional reliance on a manager to solve conflicts and make decisions, bring coworkers into more frequent conflict, as they must work issues out for themselves. Conflict resolution also:

- Causes people to listen to and consider different ideas.
- Enables people to increase their alternatives and potential paths.
- Results in increased participation and more ownership of and commitment to the decisions and goals of the group or person.

The goal of the people or the team is not to eliminate conflict but to learn how to manage conflict constructively.

These conflict resolution steps will help you reach this goal. You've decided resolving the conflict is more important than all of the reasons why people avoid conflict. Here are tips to help you practice less scary, less intimidating, more effective and successful conflict resolution, with an individual or a team.

- ◆ Create an environment that is conducive to successful conflict resolution. Quiet, private settings work the best. Agree prior to sitting down together that the purpose of the meeting is to resolve the conflict. When you make this agreement, all parties arrive prepared.
- ◆ Determine what outcomes you'd like to see as a result of the discussion. A better working relationship? A better solution to the problem? Increased alternatives for successful projects? A broadened understanding of each person's needs and wants? Thoughtful solutions and outcomes are infinite if you are creative.
- ◆ Begin by allowing each party to express their point of view. The purpose of the exchange is to make sure both parties clearly understand the viewpoint of the other. Make sure each party ties their opinions to real performance data and other facts, where possible. This is not the time to discuss; it is the time to ask questions, clarify points for better understanding and truly hear the other's viewpoint.
- ◆ Agree on the difference in the points of view. You must agree on the problem together to begin to search for a solution. Often problems are simply misunderstandings. Clarification can end the need for conflict resolution. Try to focus on the issues, not the personalities of the participants. Don't "you" each other as in, "You always ..."
- ◆ Explore and discuss potential solutions and alternatives. Try to focus on both your individual needs and wants and those of the other party. After all, if one party "wins," that means the other party "loses." People who feel as if they have lost, are not effective coworkers. They harbor resentment and may even sabotage your project or relationship. Make sure you discuss the positive and negative possibilities of each suggestion, before you reject any suggested solutions. Build a discussion that is positive and powerful for all parties.
- ◆ Agree on a plan that meets the needs of all parties and the organization. Agree on follow-up steps, as necessary, to make the plan work. Agree on what each person will do to solve the conflict. Set clear goals and know how you will measure success.
- ◆ Do what you agreed to do.

With more experience in conflict resolution, you will grow more comfortable with conflict resolution. That's a positive outcome for the workplace. It will foster idea generation, help people get along, minimize negative behaviors and promote the success of all in placing their attention where it belongs - on the customer.

34) Effective Time Management

Time management in the workplace can mean the difference between success and failure. Good time management at work will increase your productivity and reduce your stress.

Do you miss deadlines? Are you stressed out and feeling like you have too much to do and not enough time? Do you want to increase your productivity and climb the company ladder?

1. Know your job role and how your manager is measuring your performance.

Do you know what your job responsibilities are? Do you have a job scope? If you are contracting and have specialist expertise, do you know the expectations the company has of you?

One of the most important steps that you can take to improve your time management in the workplace is to clarify your role with your manager and know how your manager is measuring your progress.

When you know your role and key performance indicators it is important to determine the activities that will contribute to those key result areas.

My clients have found that setting career goals around these key performance areas can greatly increase their value to the company they work for.

Making good use of your time management at work can reduce your stress, build your confidence, and increase your value to your company.

This makes time management in the workplace important for you and your company.

Here we provide some 6 time management at work strategies that you can implement today.

Use this action template to identify the key activities for each of key result areas in your work.

Having a clear idea of the what needs to be done can help you avoid wasting time and do those activities that are most important to your job.

My clients tell me that when they know exactly what activities are important it gives them the power decide (and possibly say no) which tasks that have little impact on your targets. This alone can improve your time management in the workplace.

2. Managing interruptions.

Your mobile and desk phone are ringing, several messages have come into your email and a work colleague is asking you a question - how are you ever going to reach that important deadline?

Interruptions cost you time and productivity.

Did you know that according to a survey conducted in 2005 "The Cost of Not Paying Attention: How Interruptions Impact Knowledge Worker Productivity," that interruptions took up 28 percent of knowledge workers time.

These interruptions may or may not be in important, but they are possibly

urgent to the person doing the interrupting. An important question ask yourself is: "Are these interruptions more important to me (and the company) than the task that I am doing now?"

In a world of increasing technology, one way to deal with distractions is to remove yourself from the technology - *not likely*...is the resounding reply!

While interruptions are fact of working life, a better way to improve your time management in the workplace is to manage your work environment and the surrounding technology to reduce your distractions.

What can you do today?

1. Plan for interruptions. Know that you will be interrupted - which can reduce feeling so negative being interrupted.
2. Many workers spend 2 hours reading and responding to email. Email has the potential to dwarf all other forms of communication - thus reducing distractions with these email tips can benefit your time management in the workplace.
3. In your time management schedule, have a block of time each day that you are not interrupted. Either remove yourself from the work environment, or find a quiet room or let others know only to interrupt in the case of an emergency. See this time management story about the importance of a time management schedule.
4. When interrupted, ask questions about how important is this - get the person who interrupted to rate the importance of the task on a scale of 1 - 10. Ask them whether they have asked others, and probably most importantly, ask them what solutions or actions they have come up with. This question alone will improve your time management in the workplace.

3. Remain focused on your important and urgent activities.

Now that you know those activities your manager is measuring your performance with, staying focused on your priorities is critical to good time management in the workplace.

But with email, phone calls and social networking sites all competing for your attention, staying focused can be hard to do.

One method is download a to do list in which you prioritize those tasks that are important for achieving your

targets. Make sure you spend the majority of the day doing those activities that are most important to your job.

Even though situations will arise with colleagues or clients that demand your immediate attention, having a plan of your work day is a good thing to come back to after being interrupted.

4. Be specific about your next action.

When I look at client's to do list, they often have tasks that are really a group of tasks.

For example the other day, I had a client whose to do list included "train the sales team" and "develop a business plan".

Taking an idea from SMART goal setting and also David Allen's book, *Getting Things Done (GTD)*, it is important to get specific in your to do list.

What can you do today?

For each task in your to-do list write down the actions that you need to do. Ideally, your to do list should involve a specific next action item for the sales team".

project - such as "book meeting room for sales team" or "prepare draft of presentation for

5. One-off reports and projects.

Often there are one-off projects or reports that you may need to do. Whether it is an assignment, a work report, or a complex assignment with

many people across different sites, these steps to project planning can increase the chances of on-time project success.

6. Too much to do and not enough time: Delegation could be the key?

Delegation is one of the most talked about yet underutilized skills in time management.

Given that the benefits of delegation are that it can free up more of your important time for tasks and increase the confidence and skills of the people around you, I am surprised it is not used more often.

There are many reasons why people don't delegate. If you avoid effective delegation you could be harming yourself and causing greater stress and frustration for your employees.

However, to reap the benefits of delegation it is important to do it

right. Follow these steps to successful delegation.

Do it now and beat procrastination

Procrastination can cause you stress and is probably one of the biggest time wasters in the workplace.

When I work with clients, often I "peel back the layers" to identify what is causing them to procrastinate.

Knowing the causes of procrastination is a good place to start to beat procrastination in the workplace.

Creativity & Problem Solving Skills

“An idea that is developed and put into action is more important than an idea that exists only as an idea.”

Edward De Bono

35) How to Be Creative

Do you ever get asked 'Where did you get that idea from?' in any of your projects or pieces of work and you couldn't answer the question? Well, I have actually come across that a few times and it made me think to myself, where do I get my creativity? How do I get my creative juices flowing? How do I boost my creativity?

I made a short list of where I usually got my ideas from and came down to two things I always did to get my creative juices flowing, that being mindmapping and finding inspiration. I then compared my ways to other creative individuals on the net but we will get to that in a **bit**.

Mind mapping

So what? Everyone has heard of mind mapping but are you doing it in the best possible way - the way that suits you best? The key to perfecting mind-mapping is **creating your own personal style**.

- ◆ Do you use keywords? Images? Both?
- ◆ Do you use a variety of colors?
- ◆ Do you use a hierarchy system? A number system? Outlines? Circles?
- ◆ Do you use random words for inspiration or do you relate words? Both?
- ◆ Are all lines & thoughts connected? Or do you loiter off into new mind maps?

You must find the best method that suits you, as the key to getting great ideas and getting your creative juices flowing is by perfecting your own personal style, as not everyone has the same way of doing things.

Finding Inspiration

If you are really stuck for ideas (even after mind mapping), I have always found that by getting an idea of what other people have done and what has succeeded (or failed) is a great way to get your feet off the ground again.

Try looking in books, magazines, newspapers, on then internet, journals, and any where else you can

think of! Check this post on where to find design inspiration.

Although mind mapping and inspiration are two great ways of getting creative, there are many other ways to help you out. For example, a creative blog by the name of Think Simple Now outlines in an article how to get to your inner creativity. See below.

Other Creative Methods

Have you ever tried practicing any of the methods below? Give it a try, you'll be surprised.

- ◆ **Get Relaxed** - Take a moment to do something that makes you happy; that brings you joy; that you love; that centers you. Meditate, take a walk, go for a swim, read something that puts you in a good mood, write a diary - writing down your thoughts.
- ◆ **Give Gratitude** - Thinking about all things you are grateful for produces a positive energy flow and vibration. As you feel the love in your heart for all the wonderful blessings and gifts in your life, you will instantly relax and feel all warm-and-fuzzy inside. In that moment of warmth and love, you are open to creative energy.
- ◆ **Tickle Your Imagination** - Imagination is highly visual. Try closing your eyes, and imagine that you are in a scene, any scene. Okay - pick your ideal scene, practice seeing the details of your environment in this scene. See the colours, the textures, touch something. What does it feel like? What do you hear? What do you smell? What is the temperature like? Etc. This makes you more relaxed and gives you gratitude also.
- ◆ **Be In the Moment** - Every outstanding musician or artist will tell you that when they are creating great music or art, there are no thoughts, they are completely in the moment, and experiencing flow. Athletes call this 'being in the zone'. You can practice present moment awareness by giving full attention to whatever you are doing: eating, washing dishes, making your bed, etc. Meditation helps tremendously. The book "The Power of Now" by Eckhart Tolle is also highly recommended.
- ◆ **Be Inspired** - Practice seeing beautiful things that moves you emotionally. Flip through a book containing thought provoking images, go to an art gallery, read something inspirational, talk to someone who calms you.
- ◆ **Draw** - This may sounds funny, but one of the effective ways to practice getting in touch with your creative side is to start drawing. Drawing forces you to see things differently.
- ◆ **See Alternatives** - Be curious. Practice asking yourself how to do something differently. When seeing the solution to a problem, ask yourself,

“What are some alternative ways to doing this?” Develop the mental attitude that “there is always another way” even when alternatives seem ‘impossible’.

- ◆ **Be Open** - Never shut down any idea that comes your way, do not make judgments about it. Appreciate any idea that comes to you, even ones that seem “stupid” or “obvious”. This way, you encourage more creative ideas to surface from your being.
- ◆ **Think on Paper** - With a bunch of loose paper, start jotting ideas down. Write everything down that comes to your head: random words, phrases, ideas, thoughts... sometimes you might want to circle things and draw lines to connect ideas. When an inspiration hits, follow it. If you suddenly have a different idea, jot it down somewhere on the page or in a new page.

What other methods do you use to be creative?

36) Developing Your Problem-Solving Skills

Being a god troubleshooter requires patience, flexibility, and creativity. Here's how to improve the skills you need.

Four years ago, 11-year-old Cory Snyder, of Bowie, Maryland, recognized a problem. The Bowie Volunteer Fire Department needed infrared goggles. These goggles enable firefighters to see through smoke and save lives. The problem was that each pair of goggles cost \$25,000. Gory solved this dilemma by creating a foundation called Project Rescue Vision. He met with businesses and sent 10,000 fundraising letters. Through his efforts, he collected enough money to buy the needed goggles for the Bowie Volunteer Fire Department.

Since then, Gory has raised \$22,000 more for firefighting equipment. He

A Appeal

The ability to solve problems efficiently is one of the top 10 qualities that companies want in new employees. This is what Kellah M. Edens says. She is an education professor at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. "During job interviews, it's common to be asked 'what if' questions," says Edens. "How you answer will demonstrate your problem-solving ability. Generally, these questions deal with real problems in the workplace."

has also helped 102 groups around the country start similar projects. Recently, he won a "Take Action" award from React Magazine.

You might not receive national recognition for the problems you solve. But you do use problem-solving skills on a regular basis. Problem solving is wrestling with algebra or chemistry homework. But it's also taking on the day-to-day challenges of being a human being. At school or work, you are confronted by challenging situations. For example, what do you do about a lost wallet, a misunderstanding with a friend or co-worker, or a forgotten assignment? How well and how quickly you deal with these situations matter. Your problem-solving skills can greatly influence your personal and professional success.

Why do interviewers ask "what if" questions? Applicants with good problem-solving skills usually have positive personality traits, such as patience, independence, and curiosity. Good problem solvers usually have self-esteem, competence, and a responsible attitude toward decision-making. "Other problem-solving traits include flexibility, open-mindedness, and tolerance for ambiguity [uncertainty]," says Edens.

Step-by-Step

The most productive problem-solvers also are creative. Take Albert Einstein. The world-famous physicist understood that most problems have many possible answers. And the first answer is not always the best. Generating multiple solutions is highly desirable. To do this, you must think less rigidly, or "outside the box," says Michael Michalko, author of *Thinkertoys: A Handbook of Business Creativity*.

Edens cautions against the tendency for people to get stuck on only one

How do you do that? Take a step-by-step approach to problem solving.

- ◆ First, identify and define the problem.
- ◆ Then construct a strategy. Get the information and resources you need to implement it.
- ◆ Finally, monitor the entire process and evaluate your solution.

"Also, watch out for different restrictions. Financial or time factors, for example, may contribute to the selection of a particular solution," says Edens. For instance, let's say

particular strategy. It might have worked in the past, but may not work as well in another situation.

Evaluate each alternative. Don't criticize yourself or feel embarrassed by any errors you make, writes Michael E. Martinez, an education professor at the University of California at Irvine. If one real-life exercise doesn't get the hoped for result, try another and another. Remain cool-headed. "Allow enough time for ideas to form," suggests Edens.

your goal is to acquire a certain book. You need to read and report on it in a few days. The time factor probably eliminates the-option of getting the book on interlibrary loan.

Practical Problem Solving

The best way to improve your problem-solving skills is to practice them. Your schoolwork probably provides many opportunities. But look beyond your role as a student.

As a community volunteer, a school club member, or a part-time employee, you probably face other challenges. For example, you might want to tutor a younger child. You'd then create a plan for your student. Or you might want to raise money for a

class trip or set up a new club. Maybe you want to figure out how to handle a bully.

At home, practice problem solving by dealing with family conflicts. How can you keep your kid sister or brother out of your room? How can you complete your chores without reminders from parents? How can you save enough money to afford a car? How should you manage your

allowance? How can you maintain | your privacy?

You will need strong problem-solving skills in your social life as well. Consider these possible problems. How can you:

- ◆ avoid the drug scene?
- ◆ find friends you really trust?
- ◆ handle peer pressure?
- ◆ maintain your values when ethical conflicts arise?
- ◆ communicate honestly with your peers?

Practice problem solving by yourself and with a friend or group. Do you have a club fund-raiser to organize? See "Test Your Problem-Solving Skills" below. You'll also be improving your planning, time management, and communication skills.

Smart strategists build up the mental muscles they use in problem solving. They know these skills not only make them stronger job candidates and employees. They also make them better human beings.

Test Your Problem-Solving Skills

How can you improve your problem-solving skills? By practicing them.

Below is a problem that needs solving. Read the problem. Then follow the guidelines to your solution.

Problem

The band wants to raise money to attend an out-of-state competition. A committee of five was selected to come up with fund-raising ideas. The deadline that your advisor set is five days away. The problem is that only three of the members (including yourself) have worked on the project. One student hasn't shown up for the meetings. The other member jokes around and contributes nothing. What should you do?

Guidelines

1. State the problem in the form of a question. Make it clear and specific.
2. Gather accurate information.
3. Brainstorm a wide variety of solutions, both creative and conventional.
4. Examine and try alternatives.
5. Choose a solution.

Respect for Cultural Diversity

***“Diversity is not about how we differ.
Diversity is about embracing one
another's uniqueness.”***

Ola Joseph

37) The Benefits of Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity in the workplace is fast becoming a norm, what with the rampant globalization of the concept of globalization.

Companies/organizations no longer operate on merely national grounds; indeed, the greatest and more revered of organizations are those that operate on an international level. Diversity in the workplace is then inevitable, with the coming together of various cultures to form the system of a workplace.

The benefits of diversity in the workplace are plentiful, and more often than not, yield results to better the gains of any organization in which it is employed. One such benefit is the widened pool of viewpoints and ideas which are likely to surface in a staff of many varying cultures; in short, a diverse culture. This is due to the fact that each and every person brings with them a different set of beliefs and experiences, which, in time, prove to be useful for the organization as a whole. Take, for example, the highly-prolific magazine that has swept the nation and caught the interests of its target audience-Seventeen Magazine. In an organization such as this, a wide variety of fresh and new ideas are inevitably required for the publication of each new issue. As such, an easily accessible pool of thoughts must always be placed at the ready, for the exclusive use for the planning of monthly themes and

articles. A staff that is comprised of diverse cultures and races will bring to the table a wide selection of topics based upon their own individual cultures and experiences, and this, at the end of the day, is nothing short of enormously beneficial for the organization.

Yet another benefit of diversity in the workplace is the increment of adaptability, both from a staff-based angle, and also from an audience-based angle; that is to say, that this benefits both the audience, as well as the staff of any particular organization. Increased adaptability in the workplace generally means, for a member of the staff that, over time, the concept of diversity in the workplace will become more commonly-employed. It is therefore only natural that any member of a diverse staff accepts this readily, and becomes enculturated in this manner. They therefore adapt to the rising needs of a diverse staff, thus eliminating, or at the very least, decreasing the force of the resistance against those who are different. As the saying goes-"One has to start somewhere." For the target audience, however, increased adaptability carries the meaning of products and services that are adapted to best suit them, by the organizations that control said products and services.

This is particularly important in organizations such as advertising agencies, which require a deep understanding of the target audience.

In light of such situations, a diverse working staff in the organization holds a greater chance of studying their target audience to greater effect, and therefore holds a greater chance of adapting their product to suit their audience. An Indian-born man in an American-based production company knows best how to market the product to his own people, in his own homeland, based on his own cultural knowledge and past history. It is therefore undeniable that such forms of diversity are of great importance to any organization in question.

One other benefit of diversity in the workplace is the effect it has upon the service range of a particular organization. With the employment of diverse staff members in the workplace, a broader range of services are put out for the benefit of both the organization and also for the benefit of the target audience. This, therefore, allows any given organization the ability to operate on a global basis, as is required of the fast-paced world of today. Take, as an example, the widely commercialised soft-drink company,

Coca-Cola, who have successfully managed to have their products exported to all parts of the world. In light of this situation, it is of utmost importance, in each and every Coca-Cola branch in the aforementioned various parts of the world, that the staff-members are well-coordinated and sufficiently learned, in order to better market their product to their target audience. A Coca-Cola branch in an Asian country, Japan, for example, will, no doubt, require those of Japanese heritage in their staff. It is in this manner that cultural and language barriers will be overcome, thus ensuring proper dissemination of the product to the target audience for the benefit of the company.

While there are a great many obvious benefits which are spawned of diversity in the workplace, we must come to understand that the concept of diversity has not yet been fully accepted as of now. The challenges of diversity must be faced, and faced head-on, just as incorporation methods must be devised. Only then can we truly reap the benefits of a diverse workforce.

The Challenges

A diverse workplace is comprised of men and women of various cultures and skin-colours. In the world of today, many workplaces are fast becoming diverse, egged on by the rampant growth of globalization amongst multi-national companies/organizations. Of course,

a diverse workforce carries many benefits, but what we must come to understand is that diversity in the workplace, like any other concept, faces challenges from the realities of our world.

One such challenge is the lack of understanding that is likely to occur

between two people of different qualifications. In this sense, it may be surmised that two people, or two groups of people working within the same organization, find difficulties understanding one another. This may be due to various reasons, ranging from language barriers to the level of one's education.

Yet another challenge faced by the concept of a diverse workplace is the threat of resistance between those of the ordinary majority towards those of the diverse minority. This is true for all forms of resistance; gender-based resistance, culture-based resistance, religion-based resistance, and sexuality-based resistance, among many others. A contributing factor to the resistance of the minority by the majority is the ever-present idea of ethnocentrism; that is, the belief that one's own culture is superior to all others. An example of culture and religion based resistance may be found in the many organizations in which the staff is comprised of a diverse group of people. Those who are just the least bit different are seen as alien and incompetent, and are often ignored by those of the majority, who, all too often, refuse to work alongside this diverse minority. Gender and sexuality-based resistance, however, may be found in workplaces such as hospitals and airline companies, where male nurses are looked upon as effeminate, and female pilots as manly. In general, both the former and the latter are labeled the odd and different ones in their respective

workplaces, and are often the receivers of ridicule and torment. This, of course, leads back to resistance.

One other challenge faced by a diverse workplace is that of miscommunication between people of different cultures.

Each and every culture comes with it a set of norms, that may or may not be accepted in other cultures. It is inevitable, that when bumping heads, different cultures may experience a sense of difficulty in adapting to the opposing culture's norms. It is, therefore, also inevitable that miscommunication due to cultural differences will occur in a diverse workplace. An Australian-born man in the employment of a British agency will find himself faced with problems of commonplace slang in the course of daily conversation, as both cultures associate different things with different words. He may discover, while ordering lunch for his colleagues, that things are named quite differently; french fries as chips, among other things. In rather more severe cases, he may very well end up making a bigger jumble of things as opposed to merely messing up a lunch order. Yet another example of miscommunication with regards to cultural differences may be found in non-verbal gestures, which are exceedingly important in just about every culture. Greetings, for example, are varied; the bowing of the Japanese to their superiors may not be accepted in the Americas, just

as the kissing on both cheeks of the French may not be accepted in the Asian continent. The failure of an employee to properly realise the meanings of these non-verbal gestures may bring about severe consequences, both to his, or her job, and to the reputation of the organization in question.

In order to reap the benefits of a diverse workforce, we must first look through our differences, and learn to accept them. The challenges of diversity must be faced, and faced swiftly. Only then can we be a truly united, yet diverse workforce, and such is important in the world of today.

38) Managing Cultural Diversity

Diversity in the workplace is now an important issue because its effective management can make a company, while improper management can mar it. Workplace diversity is generally regarded by many as only concerning a group of workers in a workplace with different socio-cultural background and languages. Workplace diversity is more than this. It involves age diversity, ethnicity, ancestry, gender, physical abilities or qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, religious beliefs, family class, work experience etc.

Diversity of workers is any influence that can cause workers' delimitation or demarcation.

Diversity of workers can be due to the disparities in their different ages, religious belief, locations of the branches they are working etc. A worker in New York branch of a lingerie's outlet may be feeling superior to another worker from the same lingerie's outlet in Wisconsin. Workplace diversity management is

very important for the success of an organization because workplace diversity is inevitable in the global business village. People cannot be placed on the same salary, yet differential salaries is an issue under workplace diversity and human resources management. People now find it convenient to look for and work in different parts of the world. Language barriers, clashes of interests and oppression is just about the many problems of diversity in the workplace. But workplace diversity can be valuable if well managed. The USA is touted for its good management acumen because of its diversity of culture.

Imagine the combination in a business, the organization of an English man, with the agility of a Chinese and innovation of the Japanese. Imagine having an American manager, a British designer, a Chinese auto engineer and a Japanese production manager all with their different culture working in the same organisation producing vehicles in Detroit. If these workers can turn their different socio-cultural

background into healthy rivalry, it will be a priceless value for the organization. Products of international organizations (goods and services) are made for the whole world to consume. The best products for the world can only come from workers with different perspectives of viewing the products due to their diversity. With workers of diverse background, an organization can respond to opportunities in the world of business promptly, innovatively and cost-effectively. Any organization that pool of human resources against the principles of workers' diversity risk losing its talent to competitors and will have 'old population' at a later period.

International organization now contract workers of diverse background, age, ethnicity and culture to derive competitive advantages over their competitors. Workers with diverse age means that there will be easy succession of management team year in, year out.

It is detrimental to turn in an entire new workforce due to expiration of their predecessors. Mixing young workers with old workers though may have its psychological disadvantage of inferiority and superiority complexes, it can ensure there is proper training of young ones to take over from the old workers. It will also combines the freshness of the youths with the experiences of the olds. But how can these diverse workers be kept together to derive the best of their abilities and traits?

Managing diversity in the workplace requires setting out goals and objectives of what is to be achieved from proper management of workers of diverse background and qualities. This goal is usually to have a cohesive team that works dynamically for the success of an organization. The challenges of workplace diversity can be turned into strategies for placing an organization in a vintage position over and above its competitors. There should be a manager, whose role is to manage the workers of diverse background. Workers with diverse socio-cultural background should be allowed to mingle and mix through meetings and regular retreats. Training should be organized to foster appreciation of different culture of workers and language barriers should be broken through training of workers in the official language of the organization. Nowadays, employers prefer to recruit workers that can speak in more than one international language. Classes can be organized for workers to adopt another popular language. Workers should also communicate freely with each other, in an informal way, irrespective of their age difference. This attitude breeds intimacy and 'open-mindedness'.

Organizations should establish corporate culture which will be enshrined in the workplace. Workers should be allowed to share their experiences of working in the organization during meetings and retreats. There should challenges for

the workers to work as sub-groups. Sub-grouping a team for tasks execution has been proved to be helpful in achieving results. Through sub-grouping and mock sessions of organizations, qualities of different workers can be identified. Regularly, the members of the two or more than two teams, depending on the size of the organization, should be swapped to encourage interaction. The manager should carry out opinion survey of all members on how they feel working in each group and their preferred leader/s. The leadership identification exercise after a long period of time will ensure there is easy delegation of leadership roles and succession. The manager can

Tips

Probably the most overlooked tip for managing diversity in the workforce is that you need to hire qualified applicants. Managers who hire applicants based solely on their minority status are doing a disservice to the minority. It perpetuates the myth that there are no qualified candidates in a given minority and that's simply not true. The best way to manage diversity is to start from the basic assumption that people are people.

In any group of people there are those who are good or great or bad or awful. The entire spectrum of abilities is represented. From a business perspective you should base the majority of your decisions on each person's skills and abilities. After you hire a minority you should

introduce awards in the teams for good works and innovations.

Diversity in the workplace is challengeable as it is productive and dependable. It can ensure there is dynamics in the team of the organization that has it, if it is effectively managed. It is inevitable as the world is now a global village and as a rule, all organizations now enshrined it in their mission as being "equal opportunity employer". A manager that worth is onion cannot do other than to contend with the challenges of diversity in the workplace and manage it to advantage.

continue to treat them as any other employee.

As a manager you need to be aware of your team members heritage and cultural choices. You need to be aware of the skills, experiences, and viewpoints they bring with them.

From a business perspective you are tasking the members of your staff to perform functions for a given pay. If one of your employees has a cultural bias against working on Saturdays you need to evaluate the actual cost to the employee of working that day versus the cost of someone else in the department being asked to do so. Are you being fair in your decisions or are you being oblivious to the needs of your employees. Choosing to be aware of your employees needs can make you a much better manager.

Does that mean you should always bow to the demands of minority employees? Absolutely not! If you run a business that must be open on weekends then all prospective employees should be aware that they might be scheduled to work on weekends; unless they specifically make arrangements prior to being hired enabling them to avoid that situation. But if the requirement to work weekends is suddenly introduced then you as the manager need to be sensitive to the needs of your employees.

The second tip is to not allow employees to disrespect each other. In a business situation nobody should have the freedom to disrespect another. It shouldn't matter if you're the CEO and you're talking to a janitor. We all have different skills and abilities. They are all necessary

to the function of a business. Disrespect causes frustration and friction among employees and can become an unnecessary cost to the company in either reduced performance or financial penalties in the form of legal action.

Never assume that anyone (especially based on minority status) is incapable of adding value to a situation. I once heard a story of a truck that got stuck on a bridge because the rear wheels were going over a small hill while the front of the truck was trying to go under the frame of the bridge. Traffic was backed up for miles. Experts were called in and spent most of the day trying to resolve the problem. The actual solution came from a small boy who was watching from the crowd. He said "Why don't they just let some of the air out of the tires?"

Accountability

***"It is not only what we do, but also
what we do not do, for which we are
accountable."***

Moliere

153

*For more information on these articles and other Staff Development issues,
please contact us on ex – 35268, 33136, 35370 or e-mail us at
SDU@uneca.org*

39) The Power of Accountability

Recently I commented to a client that a newspaper article about her business contained misleading information and inaccuracies. Potential customers were going to be disappointed when they learned that certain features described in the article didn't really exist. "It's not my problem," said the client. "I didn't write the article." "But

didn't you approve it?" I asked. She shrugged. "The reporter read it to me over the phone, but I couldn't catch everything," was her dismissive—and irresponsible—answer.

One flimsy denial does not an unreliable person make, but sometimes it seems like ducking responsibility has become epidemic.

A Big Flashing Neon Sign of Character

Accountability is an old fashioned idea that says you are answerable for your actions—and inactions. If questions come up or something goes wrong, it's you who must absorb scrutiny. There's a subtle distinction between "it's not finished" and "I haven't finished it." The willingness to be accountable for what you do and what you fail or refuse to do is a crucial sign of character.

Unaccountable people are into excuses, blaming others, putting things off, doing the minimum, acting

confused and playing helpless. They pretend ignorance while hiding behind doors, computers, paperwork, jargon and other people. They say things like "I didn't know," "I wasn't there," "I don't have time," "It's not my job," "That's just the way I am," "Nobody told me," "It isn't really hurting anyone," and "I'm just following orders." Unaccountable people are quick to complain and slow to act. In organizations, lack of accountability is a highly contagious disease.

Take a Look at Yourself

How accountable are you? Does it depend on the situation, or are you always ready to accept responsibility for your decisions and behaviors? On a scale of 1-10, with 1 representing

"Never" and 10 representing "Always," rank yourself on each of these characteristics of accountability. They apply equally to professional and personal situations.

1. I communicate regularly and accurately with associates.
2. If I don't understand something, I seek out information.
3. I own my own problems and circumstances.
4. When I make a mistake, I admit it.
5. I am proactive, often taking the initiative.
6. I ask for the things I need to do my job.
7. I analyze my activities and ask, "How is this contributing to organizational objectives?"
8. I analyze my activities and ask, "What more can I do?"
9. I stand and deliver when it's time to report on my actions.
10. I welcome feedback.
11. I model accountability for the people I work with and supervise.
12. I readily confront unaccountable behavior in others.

Obviously, the higher the score, the better. Take a second look at items on which you ranked yourself at the low end of the scale. What can you do to become more accountable in those areas?

Get Out From Behind Your Job Description

In his weekly radio address on CBS's KNX-1070 AM in Los Angeles, Michael Josephson, Founder and President of the Josephson Institute of Ethics (<http://www.josephsoninstitute.org>), told this story:

While stuck in traffic, Hank, a manager of road crews, saw Nick digging holes and Claude following him to fill them up. Appalled, Hank asked Nick what he was doing. "What we've done for 10 years." Nick replied. "I dig holes and Claude fills 'em." "But that doesn't make any sense," Hank said. "Well it did until last January when Phil retired. Phil used to put a tree in the hole before Claude filled it." "You've been doing this since January? Why didn't you tell somebody?" Hank sputtered. "My

gosh, Phil got a retirement letter from you, we figured you knew."

Countless people in organizations everywhere waste time and resources digging useless holes. Engaging in mindless behaviors that defy logic is the antithesis of accountability.

Accountability means more than just doing your job. It includes an obligation to make things better, to pursue excellence, and to do things in ways that further the goals of the organization. If outmoded or wasteful tasks are part of *your* job description, it's your responsibility to do something about it.

Human Resources Consultant Peggy Foster (www.peggyfoster.com) has a unique way of measuring

accountability in the workplace. Foster suggests that you keep track of time spent in three categories of activity. First, how much time do you devote to core responsibilities? These are the "must do's" in your job description. Second, how often do you perform extras that contribute significantly to the organization but aren't really required? Finally, how much time do you spend doing things of questionable value, like unproductive busywork, unnecessary phone calls, and tasks you'd be better off delegating? According to Foster, a surefire way to increase your value within the organization is to expand the core category to include

progressively more "extras" while at the same time eliminating questionable activities. In other words, stretch yourself and your job description as well.

Be willing to rise above circumstances, including your job description if necessary, and do whatever it takes to achieve the objectives of the organization. Be proactive. Recognize problems and solve them in responsible, intelligent ways. It doesn't matter where the problem comes from. It might be yours or it might be inherited. The crucial question is, "What are you going to do about it?"

Accountability Tools

Listen. Careful, attentive listening helps you gather up-to-date, accurate information, identify problem situations and promote collaboration.

Question. Seek out information and ideas. Request clarification when you don't understand something.

Invite and offer feedback. Find out what associates think about your ideas and performance. Give honest, constructive feedback to others.

Be assertive. When necessary, confront situations and people in an assertive style that is straightforward and truthful without being threatening or overly aggressive. Ask for what you need to do your job effectively, like information, assistance and support. And don't be afraid to say no.

Being accountable is one of the fastest ways to earn respect, trust, and promotions. More importantly, it puts you in control of your life. Responding accountably to life's challenges gives you the power to change things. *That's the biggest benefit of all.*

Professional Ethics and Integrity

"Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful."

Samuel Johnson

157

*For more information on these articles and other Staff Development issues,
please contact us on ex – 35268, 33136, 35370 or e-mail us at
SDU@uneca.org*

40) Why People Break Ethics Codes?

Ethics in the workplace help the organization to grow and prosper. They bring about leadership, work culture and literacy. Develop ethics for your workplace such that, the foundation of it will never shake or succumb to the evils of devious minds.

Ethics is defined as the method designed for a code of conduct. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that addresses the questions of morality through a set of behavioral guidelines. A workplace being the source of bread and butter for many, also satisfies the self-actualization

needs. It provides a reason as a standard of living. Hence, by that virtue, business ethics, which sustain morality and help evolution have to be followed at a workplace. Following these ethics in the workplace happen to be a personal choice. A choice that cannot be forced upon, but only explained and expected. A workplace is a cluster of individuals, and hence an amalgamation of attitudes and imaginations, which often dilute the existence of ethics. It takes the zeal of an evangelist to imbibe ethics in the workplace force to grow the organization in a holistic way.

Personal Ethics

Personal ethics is a branch that determines the code of conduct one adheres to. Its a course of action an individual decides to take up in order to reach the ultimate truth. As personal ethics are, to each his own, they differ. However, following personal code of ethics brings

accountability and responsibility to life. It gives a purpose and direction, bringing out a meaning to life. Personal ethics are huge determining factors of ethics at the workplace. The same shall in elaborate, as the article unfolds.

Honesty

'Honesty is the best policy' is a statement as old as the hills and as deep as the ocean. Yet, the commonly practiced statement is, truth is always inconvenient. May be it is, but only in the short term. A myopic mind will always see what is the short term again, and thus indulge in lying. An

escapist act betrays you, because eventually you can't. be fooling yourself. Therefore, make a fresh start to incorporate the aspect of honesty with the new recruits, as many a times you may come across difference in personal ethics.

Commitment

Commitment phobia traps more than claustrophobia. It traps you within yourself, stealing the truth from you that you can commit. However, in a workplace there is no evading commitment. Commitment towards your workplace is the biggest

motivating ingredient. Agreed, that, commitment has to come from within, but a little coaxing can help your employees to see within. Help your employees reach their inner self to seek commitment so that your organization prospers.

Loyalty

Loyalty is faithfulness towards your work. Loyalty builds a sense of trust among the employees. It is a quality that one always wishes to find in a friend or life partner. The same goes

towards absorbing it in a workplace ethics. A silly act of disloyalty will end things up in an unpleasant way in the present and in future as well.

Right and the Right

The shortest and the oldest written constitution of this world, says each and every citizen of the land has the right to liberty, life and property. Each one of us has a right to do what we want. However, these rights are governed by a set of rules formed due to conditioning of the mind. These rules are called as ethics. Hence, every act should be done with the right 'right' or else it only leads to a colossal chaos.

white are the moral questions that only the power of perception of can decide, but they all demand evolution, which finds its root to the ethics in the workplace.

Honesty, loyalty, commitment and rights go in building a conducive work culture in a workplace. It enhances the business literacy and helps addressing the problem in a much efficient manner. Although personal ethics differ, they matter in making of the ethical standards of the organization. Because of the difference, every employees needs to be put on one single ethical platform. Right or wrong, good or bad, black or

Business ethics are in the forefront of today's news as corporate scandals continue to surface throughout the world. Many organizations have developed new ethic guidelines in the last few years in an attempt to emphasize the importance of ethics to their management teams.

Despite the emphasis on ethics, most organizations issue ethics statements and policies without addressing the key issue, which is behavior. Organizations fall into the false promise that have a strong ethics code their management team will somehow have the character and poise to meet the ethics code.

A recent survey conducted by the American Management Association and the Human Resource Institute identified the top three factors that

would cause people to break their organizations' ethical standards. These include:

- ◆ **Pressure to meet unrealistic objectives or deadlines.** An overwhelming 70 percent of respondents indicated a willingness to break with standards if they needed to do so to achieve a difficult objective or meet an overly aggressive deadline.
- ◆ **Career advancement.** In a distant second place, 39 percent said they would compromise an ethical standard if it meant advancing one's career. This could be taken to mean that the employee would break company policy for an internal advancement or that they might reveal proprietary information in order to land a job at a competitor.
- ◆ **Protecting their livelihood.** The third most prevalent temptation is that of self-preservation. Thirty-four percent of the respondents indicated that they would compromise ethics if it would protect their livelihood.

Two Proven Ways to Reduce Ethics Breaches

Two simple solutions are available to organizations to reduce these three potentially dangerous ethics breaches.

The first is relatively easy: use **team decision-making** skills. The effective use of team decision-making skills sets realistic objectives and deadlines for an organization. This is not to say that the deadlines and objectives represent any kind of sandbagging; it is to say that the group analyzes the decision to be made and works together to achieve a plan that is both expeditious and attainable because the team believes it is possible. The results are typically astounding. One manufacturer that use the program saw a 53 percent decline in rejected parts within one month after completing a teamwork program.

A second successful method is using interactive **ethics workshops**. These workshops do not just discuss the need for ethics or the ramifications of not complying with ethics. The most successful workshops are those that help individuals understand exactly where it is that they would personally draw the line when he comes to breaking an ethic. Workshops of this nature are filled with self-awareness exercises that are instrumental in helping understand exactly where the person envisions the line between right and wrong.

Most people realize that it is wrong to steal a laptop computer. Unfortunately many people feel it is okay to steal a pen. But people don't realize is at what point between a pen and a laptop ethical becomes unethical in their own mind. You can

do all the preaching you want about what is right and wrong but until someone really understands where

they personally view ethics you will not have a lasting impact.

Tips on Establishing an Ethics Program

Establishing an ethics program is not an exact science. As with the development of other organizational programs, it involves the input, interaction, cooperation, decision-making, and ongoing commitment of many people. Proper planning is important, but the effectiveness of any association's approach also depends on characteristics that are unique to its culture, the leadership style of the executive director and

executive team, the association's relationship with its board of directors, and so on. In addition, discussion of workplace ethics can raise sensitive issues. Some people in your organization may have difficulty or be uncomfortable discussing these issues. Given these caveats, a valuable exercise for association executives is to first ask, consider, and answer seven key questions:

- I. Why might good people in this organization do unethical things?
- II. What are our organization's values?
- III. Have we adequately articulated these values internally and externally?
- IV. Does our organization have written ethics policies, procedures, or structures?
- V. To whom is our organization accountable?
- VI. What do we mean by "success"?
- VII. Does the leadership of our organization support the idea of an ethical workplace?

41) Ethics in the Workplace

We've all heard these rules to live by: Don't hurt, don't steal, don't lie, and the more famous "Do unto others as you would have done to you." In our personal lives most people try to follow these rules. Ethics are often thought of by many as something that is related to the personal side of life and not to the business side. In some businesses, having ethics may actually be frowned upon. This is usually due to the fact that business is about doing what's best for the bottom line and not always about doing the right thing.

Practical Impact

Executives typically want the answers to two key questions about ethics in their offices: "How do workplace ethics apply to practical goals of my organization and the work of my employees?" and "Is there reliable data to support these assertions?" The Ethics Resource Center (www.ethics.org), a nonprofit organization, assists leaders to impact their organizations by identifying ethical risks and establishing systems to emphasize higher standards for business conduct.

The Ethics Resource Center annually conducts a National Business Ethics Survey (NBES) – a rigorous telephone survey of 1,500 U.S. employees. The NBES findings are encouraging for organizations that have an emphasis on positive workplace ethics. For example, employees have high expectations for

It is commonly understood that there are *ethics* and then there are *workplace ethics*. Often we don't stop to realize that there is no difference between personal ethics and ethics in the workplace; ethics are the same whether at work or in personal life.

After all, ethics are about making choices that may not always feel good or seem like they benefit you. Ethical choices are the "right" choices to make and are examples of rules to live by.

ethics within their organizations. Nine in ten respondents say that they "expect their organizations to do what is right, not just what is profitable."

This suggests that most employees are not cynical about ethics at work, encouraging news when considering the implementation or development of ethics initiatives as the long term success of any program rely on the active support of employees.

Formal ethics programs and informal ethics practices were shown to affect certain key outcomes. Employees who work in companies with active ethics programs who observe leaders modeling ethical behavior, and also observe the application of values such as honesty, respect and trust applied frequently at work, report more

positive experiences that include the following:

- ◆ Less pressure on employees to compromise ethics standards
- ◆ Less observed misconduct at work
- ◆ Greater willingness to report misconduct
- ◆ Greater satisfaction with their organization's response to misconduct they report
- ◆ Greater overall satisfaction with their organizations
- ◆ Greater likelihood of "feeling valued" by their organizations

Findings of Concern

The NBES uncovered a substantial gap between senior and middle managers and lower-level employees. A consistent finding with management was the perception that their organizations have a positive ethical environment. This conflicts with the perception of lower-level employees however. This suggests that executives may underestimate the importance of specific ethics issues and concerns facing employees.

This disconnect may also position executives to fail to address these issues adequately within their organization's ethics programs. Therefore it is important for executives to include input from

employees at lower levels in the development of ethics programs and to continue to seek out their input and feedback on a regular basis.

In addition to the communications gap between employees and executives, one in three employees believe that their coworkers will perceive them as "snitches" if they report misconduct. This is roughly the same proportion of employees who believe that management will see them as "troublemakers" for reporting ethical concerns. A key element to take away from this discovery is the need to address and eliminate retaliation systemically, at the management and peer levels throughout the organization.

Questions Answered

Let's go back to our two key questions: "How do workplace ethics apply to practical goals of my organization and the work of my

employees?" and "Is there reliable data to support these assertions?" There are a variety of practical reasons for executives to focus on

workplace ethics and reliable data that supports these efforts. The NBES findings consistently link ethics programs to more positive organizations outcomes and increased employee satisfaction.

It would be naïve to suggest that an emphasis on ethics will improve the

work environment and solve the company's problems overnight. In many cases a well developed and organized effort to target key ethical issues sends an important message. It tells employees that your organization is moving in a positive direction, one that is positive for them as individuals.

Establishing an Ethics Program

Establishing an ethics program is not an exact science. As with any organizational program, it will involve the input and cooperation of many people. The effectiveness of any organization's approach will depend on characteristics that are unique to its culture, the leadership

styles, proper planning, and so on. Since some people may be uncomfortable talking about the issues of ethics it can be helpful if management first asks, considers, and then responds to the following questions:

- Why might good people in this organization do unethical things?
- What are our organization's values?
- Have we adequately articulated these values internally and externally?
- Does our organization have written ethics policies, procedures, or structures?
- To whom is our organization accountable?
- What do we mean by "success"?
- Does the leadership of our organization support the idea of an ethical workplace?

With the feedback obtained by discussing the questions above, management will have a better idea of the perceptions their employees have on how the company is performing ethically.

In the end, it's all about beginning with our personal and collective understanding of ethics. The second step is awareness of, and solutions to, questions concerning ethics as applied to the workplace. Many universities are now heavily applying the teaching of ethics to their

curricula. Graduates of these programs take this information into the workforce with the understanding that solid, positive ethics need to be applied there as well as in the private sector.

In a perfect world, corporations will be better able to avoid embarrassing

scandals that appear and reappear in both national and world-wide news scandals. Small businesses will be able to keep and attract more clients and customers. Negotiations between businesses could be accomplished with increased consideration for the other company. This is something for which we can all strive

42) Conflict Resolution Skills for Healthy Relationships

With most conflicts, it's important to find a resolution. This seems like a statement of the obvious, but many people suppress their anger or just 'go along to get along.' They think that by addressing a conflict, they are creating one, and simply keep quiet when upset. Unfortunately, this isn't a healthy long-term strategy. For one thing, unresolved conflict can lead to resentment and additional unresolved conflict in the relationship. Even more important, ongoing conflict can actually have a negative impact on your health and longevity. (See this piece for more on the detrimental effects of relationship conflict.)

Unfortunately, resolving conflict can be tricky as well. Handled improperly, attempts at conflict

Get In Touch With Your Feelings

An important component of conflict resolution involves only you -- knowing how you feel and why you feel that way. It may seem you're your feelings should already be obvious to you, but this isn't always the case. Sometimes we feel angry or resentful, but don't know why. Other times, we feel that the other person isn't doing what they 'should,' but we

resolution can actually make the conflict worse. For example, researcher John Gottman and his colleagues studied the way couples fight, and can actually predict which couples will go on to divorce by observing their conflict resolution skills -- or lack thereof. (Hint: If you're constantly criticizing your partner's character, or shutting down during arguments rather than working through conflict in a proactive, respectful way, watch out.)

For those who weren't born into a family where perfect conflict resolution skills were modeled on a daily basis (and—let's face it—how many of us were?), here are some guidelines to make conflict resolution more simple and less stressful.

aren't aware of exactly what we want from them, or if it's even reasonable. Journaling can be an effective way to get in touch with our own feelings, thoughts and expectations so we are better able to communicate them to the other person. Sometimes this process brings up some pretty heavy issues, and can be helpful.

Hone Your Listening Skills

When it comes to effective conflict resolution, how effectively we listen is at least as important as how effectively we express ourselves. It's vital to understand the other person's perspective, rather than just our own, if we are to come to a resolution. In fact, just helping the other person feel heard and understood can sometimes go a long way toward the resolution of a conflict. Good listening also helps for you to be able to bridge the gap between the two of you, understand where the disconnect lies, etc. Unfortunately, active listening is

a skill that not everybody knows, and it's common for people to think they're listening, while in their heads they're actually formulating their next response, thinking to themselves how wrong the other person is, or doing things other than trying to understand the other person's perspective. It's also common to be so defensive and entrenched in your own perspective that you literally can't hear the other person's point of view. (If this any of this sounds familiar, you may want to read this helpful article on listening skills.)

Practice Assertive Communication

Communicating your feelings and needs clearly is also an important aspect of conflict resolution. As you probably know, saying the wrong thing can be like throwing fuel on a fire, and make a conflict worse. The important thing to remember is to say what's on your mind in a way that is clear and assertive, without being aggressive or putting the other person on the defensive. One effective

conflict resolution strategy is to put things in terms of how you feel rather than what you think the other person is doing wrong, using 'I feel' statements. (See this assertiveness training article for more on this, or take the Conflict Resolution Quiz to see what your conflict resolution communication style is, and find tips on being more assertive.)

Seek a Solution

Once you understand the other person's perspective, and they understand yours, it's time to find a resolution to the conflict -- a solution you both can live with. Sometimes a simple and obvious answer comes up once both parties understand the other person's perspective. In cases where the conflict was based on a misunderstanding or a lack of insight to the other's point of view, a simple apology can work wonders, and an

open discussion can bring people closer together. Other times, there is a little more work required. In cases where there's a conflict about an issue and both people don't agree, you have a few options: Sometimes you can agree to disagree, other times you can find a compromise or middle ground, and in other cases the person who feels more strongly about an issue may get their way, with the understanding that they will concede

the next time. The important thing is to come to a place of understanding, and try to work things out in a way

Know When It's Not Working

Because of the toll that ongoing conflict can exact from a person, sometimes it's advisable to put some distance in the relationship, or cut ties completely. In cases of abuse, for example, simple conflict resolution techniques can only take you so far, and personal safety needs to take priority. When dealing with difficult family members, on the other hand,

that's respectful to all involved. (For more information, see this article on communication skills.)

adding a few boundaries and accepting the other person's limitations in the relationship can bring some peace. In friendships that are unsupportive or characterized by ongoing conflict, letting go may be a great source of stress relief. Only you can decide if a relationship can be improved, or should be let go.

43) **Bullying in the Workplace**

Employers are beginning to take steps to make bullying as unthinkable as sexual harassment or drunkenness in the workplace.

Schoolyard bullying - the torment of one child by another - is often compared to workplace bullying. Both types represent a grab for

control by an insecure, inadequate person, an exercise of power through the humiliation of the target. School bullies, if reinforced by cheering classmates, fearful teachers or ignoring administrators, grow up to be dominating adults. When they join the work force, they continue to bully others.

Psychological Violence

A 1999 International Labour Organization (ILO) report on workplace violence emphasized that physical and emotional violence is one of the most serious problems facing the workplace in the new millennium. The ILO definition of workplace violence includes bullying:

"any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. These behaviors would originate from customers, co-workers at any level of the organization. This definition would include all forms of harassment, bullying, intimidation, physical threats/assaults, robbery and other intrusive behaviors."

CUPE's National Health and Safety Survey of Aggression Against Staff, published in January, 1994, mentions verbal aggression and harassment in its definition of violence:

"Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted during the course of his/her employment. This includes the application of force, threats with or without weapons, severe verbal abuse and persistent sexual and racial harassment."

Bullying (general harassment) is far more prevalent than other destructive behaviors covered by legislation, such as sexual harassment and racial discrimination.

A Canadian survey on workplace violence found that physical violence is often reported from outside sources, such as customers, students and patients. Psychological violence is more often reported from within the organization. A U.S. study estimates 1 in 5 American workers has experienced destructive bullying in the past year.

Workplace Policies Needed

On April 6, 1999, a former employee of OC Transpo in Ottawa went on a shooting rampage that left four employees dead, then took his own life. The killer had himself been the victim of workplace harassment.

Among the recommendations of a coroner's inquest was that the definition of workplace violence should include not only physical violence but also psychological violence such as bullying, mobbing, teasing, ridicule or any other act or

words that could psychologically hurt or isolate a person in the workplace.

No jurisdiction in Canada requires employers to have a workplace violence prevention program. For that reason, the OC Transpo jury recommended that federal and provincial governments enact legislation to prevent workplace violence and that employers develop policies to address violence and harassment.

Perpetrators and Targets

Over 72 per cent of bullies are bosses, some are co-workers and a minority bully higher-ups. A bully is equally likely to be a man or a woman.

The common stereotype of a bullied person is someone who is weak, an oddball or a loner. On the contrary,

the target chosen by an adult bully will very often be a capable, dedicated staff member, well liked by co-workers. Bullies are most likely to pick on people with an ability to cooperate and a non-confrontative interpersonal style. The bully considers their capability a threat, and determines to cut them down.

Profile of a Bully

Adult bullies, like their schoolyard counterparts, tend to be insecure people with poor or non-existent social skills and little empathy. They turn this insecurity outwards, finding satisfaction in their ability to attack and diminish the capable people around them.

A workplace bully subjects the target to unjustified criticism and trivial fault-finding. In addition, he or she humiliates the target, especially in front of others, and ignores,

overrules, isolates and excludes the target.

If the bully is the target's superior, he or she may: set the target up for failure by setting unrealistic goals or deadlines, or denying necessary information and resources; either overload the target with work or take all work away (sometimes replacing proper work with demeaning jobs); or increase responsibility while removing authority.

Regardless of specific tactics, the intimidation is driven by the bully's

The Burden of Bullying

Bullied employees waste between 10 and 52 per cent of their time at work. Research shows they spend time defending themselves and networking for support, thinking about the situation, being demotivated and stressed, not to mention taking sick leave due to stress-related illnesses.

Bullies poison their working environment with low morale, fear, anger, and depression. The employer pays for this in lost efficiency, absenteeism, high staff turnover, severance packages and law suits. In extreme cases, a violent incident may be the tragic outcome.

Prevention

Workplace bullies create a tremendous liability for the employer by causing stress-related health and safety problems, and driving good employees out of the organization.

The business case for strict anti-bullying policies is compelling. Potential benefits include a more peaceful and productive workplace, with better decision making, less time lost to sick leave or self-defensive paperwork, higher staff retention, and a lower risk of legal action.

Identify bullying in your staff handbook as unacceptable behavior. Establish proper systems for

need to control others.

The target's family and friends also suffer the results of daily stress and eventual breakdown. Marriages suffer or are destroyed under the pressure of the target's anxiety and anger. Friendships cool because the bullied employee becomes obsessive about the situation.

Moreover, our health care system ends up repairing the damage: visits to the doctor for symptoms of stress, prescriptions for antidepressants, and long term counseling or psychiatric care. In this sense, we all pay.

investigating, recording and dealing with conflict. Investigate complaints quickly, while maintaining discretion and confidentiality and protecting the rights of all individuals involved. It is important to understand fully any incidence of bullying and take the problem seriously at all levels.

Organizations who manage people well outperform those who don't by 30 to 40 per cent. Development of strong interpersonal skills at all levels is fundamental to good management and a healthy workplace.

There is no place for bullies in a well-run organization.

44) Professionalism in the Workplace

Supervisory Skills Essentials

Are you are struggling with motivating employees to get the most productivity? If so, then you are probably wondering how to become a "motivating supervisor".

Your employees can find motivation if you are proactive in your

approach. Particularly during a tough economy, supervisors and businesses must recognize employees for their hard work.

Motivating Employees: How to Become a Motivating Supervisor

Have you ever walked into the office and all of your employees stop talking and quickly go back to work. Were they slacking off until their supervisor was there? Is it simply your presence that is creating motivating employees? Even if it's then own work ethic, when employees are not motivated, can you guess whom they blame – their supervisor.

If you are struggling with motivating employees to get the most productivity, you are probably wondering how to become a motivating supervisor. Your

employees can find you motivating if you are proactive in your approach. Particularly during these tough economic times, supervisors and businesses must recognize employees for their hard work.

If you can simply reaffirm the value of your employees during difficult times for your organization, then you won't lose your best people when times are bright. Supervisors have struggled in this area for years. Don't be discouraged; motivating is a skill that can be learned.

Here are a few strategies to ponder.

Provide a nurturing environment for your team.

If you are only concerned about production and not about the people who can produce, chances are, they will not produce. Motivating employees properly means caring for

more than just bottom-line results; this can often present a problem for Many supervisors believe that it is not their job to nurture their employees – that nurturing is something that should be done at home. Those supervisors are wrong. When employees feel genuinely cared for, then you are motivating employees to increase productivity. Being a motivating supervisor means assessing what your employees need.

Encourage personal growth.

This is important for you and your employees. This can be difficult for many motivating supervisors because it is not something that can be

- ◆ First, their priorities and what is important to them
- ◆ Second, their goals and dreams for the future
- ◆ Third, how you as a supervisor can assist in motivating employees to meet each of their goals

In addition, offer training and development in areas that will improve personal growth as well as increase their effectiveness. Imagine you have an employee who is always late and they tell you it is always because of family issues. If he writes down that his family is a priority, but has a goal to be at work on time, then perhaps you can facilitate by

Empower your employees.

Have you ever had a supervisor who spends all day looking over your shoulder? Perhaps you have been that supervisor. Is that really a way to be a motivating supervisor who reaches his/her employees?

you.

Some people may just need to work with other people who care about them. However, as your organization grows you may need to consider providing counseling or pastoral care. There is a direct correlation between the health of your employees and the health of your organization.

measured. Have employees write down their thoughts in the following areas:

enrolling him in a time management course. This will help him meet the needs of his family, and get him to work on time.

When employees feel good about themselves, they will perform. Encouraging personal growth is imperative for motivating employees.

Employees need to be trained, and then empowered to make good decisions. Trusting the people that report to you can help towards motivating employees to take on more responsibilities. When people take on more responsibility they

begin to take ownership. This is a good thing. People do not like to be micromanaged. If you have provided

the proper training, trust your employees to use it.

A top-down method.

These are some of the essential strategies and skills possessed by a motivating supervisor. It is up to you to start being proactive and implementing methods towards motivating employees. Always remember that motivation is a top-down method.

Are you trying to make the transition from co-worker to supervisor? Have you found

yourself promoted, dealing with an extra workload, and in charge of a team? Congratulations! The next step is realizing the care and responsibility you need to motivate employees who are no longer your co-workers. Your supervisory skills are tested with a supervisory promotion - and the transition is not always easy!

How to Transition from Co-Worker to Supervisor

(With as Few Bumps as Possible)

Congratulations! You got it! The promotion you have been dreaming about has finally been offered to you! But as you walk into your new office, you realize that you have not only just received a significant pay raise and more holiday time, but a lot more responsibility and the challenge of overseeing your co-workers. You are no longer just a friend or co-worker - you are now the boss!

When a person starts a job, usually they begin at the lowest spot on the totem pole with the goal of working their way to the top. As people strive to climb the corporate ladder, they are faced with the challenge of how to transition from co-worker to supervisor. The transition is not always easy and sometimes it's intolerable.

The Transition From Co-Worker to Supervisor

For example, take Lacey's transition from co-worker to supervisor: Lacey was working with her company for four years when she was offered the supervisory trainer position.

Although a few other co-workers had applied for the position, the boss chose Lacey as she was very organized, approachable, and knowledgeable about the position.

However, as Lacey is younger than most of the staff, she finds it difficult to approach some of the co-workers who have more seniority with the company (who also think they should have received the promotion!) regarding some pertinent issues. She feels that by forcing her supervisory position onto her co-workers, the issue will just get worse.

How would you handle this situation? How would you approach this co-worker? When learning how to transition from co-worker to supervisor, there are a few tips that will help you answer these questions and make the transition as smooth as possible.

Be Authentic.

Do not be someone you are not. You have worked with these people for a few years already and they know who you are, so it is not necessary to

prove to them who you are. A promotion does not change who you are, it only changes what you do, your title and your workload.

Be a Team Player.

You may now be the supervisor, but remember it takes a team of people to get the job done. You are there to help your co-workers; to serve them, come underneath by supporting them

and to make it better for them whatever way you can. Remember that it takes teamwork to make a dream work.

Encourage Communication.

Keep the lines of communication open. It may take some time for your co-workers to feel that they can approach you with some issues. Keep your office door open and incorporate

regular meetings where your employees have the opportunity to talk to you about any issues they may have.

Take a Stand.

Do not be afraid to confront your former co-workers. If you need to address a certain situation, do not back down. Take a deep breath and gently dive in! Your employees need to see that you will not be

disrespected and walked over; you are their leader whether they like it or not. They will probably appreciate what you have to say, especially if they know you are on their side.

Good Things in Small Doses.

One of the worst things you could do in your new position is to immediately incorporate changes. This will scare your employees and instill fear in the office. If some things need to be adjusted, take it one step at a time. Your employees will probably embrace the changes down the road and be thankful for the fresh outlook. Just remember that with any kind of change, there will be resistance, so be prepared for it.

Remember that when learning how to transition from co-worker to supervisor, it will take time and patience. You'll find that you won't be comfortable in your role overnight and there may be a few bumps along the way. Just remember that bumps can be ironed out and a smooth transition is possible. It's all up to you.

45) Office Etiquette

From time to time, it is necessary to go back to career advice basics and send out a reminder about the everyday forgotten "rules" of office behavior. Sometimes we get so comfortable in our jobs and with our co-workers that we overlook a simple common courtesy or blend social and business interaction within the confines of the corporate environment much too freely.

Your desk

Think of your desk as your body when you first start to date a beautiful woman. You work hard to maintain it (I assume) and keep yourself fresh and clean for her (I assume). But for some, the effort goes out the window when they get too comfortable in the relationship.

Your appearance

Same advice as above, but this time, the mess is you (although I hope not) and of course, certain blue-collar jobs are the exception here. When you first start a job, you want to impress everyone and wake up extra early to prepare for the day. You primp more, you shave closer and you try to look your best. Then you realize that nobody cares and once your place in the company org chart is secure, you cut corners here and there. Maybe you wait another day to shave and sleep in instead. Perhaps you wear the

It is always a mistake to forget where you are when you are at work. There is a time for fun, sure, but by the same token, it is much better to err on the side of caution and be careful with the actions and words you use to express yourself.

Here, then, are some guidelines to better present yourself at work and project a professional image:

Well, your desk is the same darn thing. The key, like your physical appearance, is to maintain a clean and tidy workspace for you, and not for your manager, cubicle neighbor or the company president. Take pride in your work area and be more efficient at your job. A messy desk is not a "system." It is a manifestation of gross neglect. Clean up your act.

same pair of pants two days in a row. Whatever it is, the precipitous decline into indifference has begun.

Get yourself in check now and look as professional as you act (more on that in a bit), whether you punch the clock at a factory or a law firm. Start to care; this is the point here. Dress like a professional, whatever professional you may be, and more importantly, act like one.

Your physical & verbal behavior

Comportment, demeanor, behavior --

whatever. Your conduct at work becomes reflective of your personality over time. How you walk, sit at your desk and handle yourself in a meeting or with a group of co-

Sit up straight: When you slouch, you seem lazy and apathetic. Good luck with that promotion if you keep it up.

More tips on getting physical at the office

Be alert: Keep yourself in the loop at the office with one ear to the ground at all times. Implicate yourself in business developments as well as the lives of your co-workers; the latter of course, in a most professional manner.

Be discreet: This goes for your cell phone, PDA and other necessary technical tools of your job. This seems obvious enough, but it's a practice that is ignored by far too many. The rule that I want to get across here is that co-workers and management should be aware of your presence and ability to come through in the clutch whenever they need you, but in the most discreet manner possible. So if you have to crack a joke, make it a clever one and then shut your mouth and resist the follow-up. Make like George Costanza and leave the room or

workers is imperative. This is a subject I have dealt with before, but in the interest of this specific topic, keep these tips in mind:

discussion on a high note. And when it comes to the job, do it fast and do it smart. Never brag about your accomplishments, and present yourself as a reliable team player who delivers the money shot at the buzzer.

Know when to let go: If you follow my advice so far to the letter, you may end up more automaton than human being at work. This is not my suggestion at all. Try to hone your instincts so that you know for certain when the time is ideal to showcase your weekend personality. The best way to do so is to observe others and how they screw up. I mean it. When you watch people work themselves into an awkward situation at work, you can pick up on some great ways to make yourself look good. Just identify the opposite course of action and do likewise.

I most definitely do recommend that you stick your neck out from time to time and not paint yourself into too safe a corner. You're likely to be dismissed more often than not if that's your modus operandi. It's really all about taking smart, calculated risks with what you say, when you say it, and how you say it.

Common courtesy

This is a forgotten art in most circles and I find that sad. People never make eye contact or say hello and ask how you are, let alone inquire about your weekend plans with sincerity. The workday is tough enough to plow through with genial relations with your co-workers, let alone without.

Put your problems and preoccupations aside and focus on the people around you at work every now and then. Strike up a conversation about a common interest; hold the

door open for people when you enter the office; spring for coffee and muffins or just plain compliment a co-worker and mean it. It's not that hard to do and trust me, the rewards far outstrip the requisite effort.

So adhere to some simple rules of office etiquette and decency to better sell yourself as a quality employee. And when your efforts result in a promotion or pat on the back from the boss, remember to thank me.

Reference Links

1. Planning and Organizing

Personal Time Management

Author » Gerard M Blair

Source Web Link » <http://www.sec.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/art2.html>?
<http://www.ec.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/art2.html>

Related Links » http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_00.htm
<http://ezincarticles.com/?5-Steps-to-Better-Time-Management&id=1885207>

Effective Meeting Management

Author » Carter McNamara

Source Web Link » <http://managementhelp.org/misc/mtgmgmt.htm>

Related Links » <http://management.about.com/cs/people/a/MeetingMgt0601.htm>
http://humanresources.about.com/od/meetingmanagement/a/meetings_work.htm

2. Communication Skills

Listen With Your Eyes - Understanding Nonverbal Communication

Author » Susan M. Heathfield

Source Link » http://humanresources.about.com/od/interpersonalcommunication1/a/nonverbal_com.htm

Related Links » http://humanresources.about.com/od/interpersonalcommunication1/a/quotes_nonverb.htm

For more information on these articles and other Staff Development issues, please contact us on ex – 35268, 33136, 35370 or e-mail us at SDU@uneca.org

Assertive Communication

Author » Kit Hennessy

Source Web Link » <http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/faculty-dev/assertive-communication-0205.pdf>

Related Link » <http://www.exforsys.com/career-center/assertive/non-verbal-assertive-communication.html>

The Meaning of your Communication and Its Effect

Author » Daniel Robin

Source Web Link » http://as01.ucis.dal.ca/hrd/hrd_7690.html

Related Link >> <http://human-resources-management.suite101.com/articles.cfm>

Effective Praise, Effective Criticism

Author » Mario Carini

Source Web Link » <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/17/feedback.html>

Related Link >> <http://human-resources-management.suite101.com/articles.cfm>

Oral Presentation Skill

Author » Jennifer C. Selland

Source Web Link » <http://www.well-run.com/eops.pdf>

Related Links » <http://www.asco.org/aui/Past+Issues/April+2007/Preparing+an+Effective+Oral+Presentation?cpsextcurrchannel=1>
https://www.amazines.com/article_detail.cfm/132331?articleid=132331
http://soft-skills-development.suite101.com/article.cfm/delivering_effective_oral_presentations

181
*For more information on these articles and other Staff Development issues,
please contact us on ex – 35268, 33136, 35370 or e-mail us at
SDU@uneca.org*

The Magic of Dialogue

Author >> Daniel Yankelovich
Source Web Link >> <http://www.athelath.com/consumer/disorders/dialogue.html>

Dealing With Difficult People at Work

Author >> Sean Hewitt
Source Web Link >> <http://www.totalsuccess.co.uk/dealingwithdifficultpeople>

Importance of Communication Skills in Organizational Performance

Author >> Alla Kondrat
Source Web Link >> <http://human-resources-management.suite101.com/articles.cfm>
Related Link >> <http://www.helium.com/items/1187093-the-challenges-of-diversity-in-the-workplace>

3. Career Support AND SELF DEVELOPMENT

Life-After-Retirement: How to Enjoy Your New Lifestyle

Author >> Kanaga Siva
Source Web Link >> <http://ezinearticles.com/?Life-After-Retirement---How-to-Enjoy-Your-New-Lifestyle&id=2074320>

Community of Practice: Learning as a Social System

Author >> Etienne Wenger
Source Web Link >> <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledgegarden/p/lss.shtml>
Related Link >> <http://amakar.com/pmo-tips/77-community-of-practice-tages-of-development>

Becoming a Sage: The Keys to Life-long Self-Development

Author >> Susan McKeone,
Source Web Link >> http://humanresources.about.com/od/careersuccess/a/become_sage_2.htm
Related Link >> http://humanresources.about.com/od/careersuccess/a/become_sage_3.htm

182

For more information on these articles and other Staff Development issues, please contact us on ex – 35268, 33136, 35370 or e-mail us at SDU@uneca.org

Promote Your Personal Growth and Motivation

- Author » Susan M. Heathfield
Source Web Link » http://humanresources.about.com/od/careerdevelopment/a/promote_growth.htm
Related Link » <http://www.positivearticles.com/tips/index.html>
<http://www.mhmail.com/Articles.html>
<http://www.tomorrowledge.net/personal-development-and-self-empowerment-articles.html>

Qualities of a Good Mentor

- Author » Penny Loretto
Source web Link » <http://internships.about.com/od/networking/a/findingamentor.htm>
Related Link » <http://management.about.com/b/2006/06/14/mentoring-good-for-both-people.htm>

Career Mobility: A Choice or Necessity?

- Author » Bettina L. Brown
Source Web Link » <http://www.vtaide.com/pug/ERIC/Career-Mobility.htm>
Related Links » <http://www.unstallmobility.org/home/>
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2937647.pdf>

Interviewing Skills for Applicants: Top Tips for Tough Interview Questions.

- Author >> Geraldine Eliot
Source Web Link >> http://job-interview.skills.suite101.com/article.cfm/top_tips_for_tough_job_interview_questions

The Power of Positive Thinking

- Author >> Dana Polkinghorne
Source >> <http://danapolkinghorne.wordpress.com/2008/12/12/positive-thinking-in-the-workplace>

4. Performance Management

Getting the Most from Performance Appraisals

- Author » Graham Yemm
- Source Web Link » <http://performance-management.bestmanagementarticles.com/a-2353-getting-the-most-from-appraisals.aspx>
- Related Link » <http://performance-management.bestmanagementarticles.com/a-825-surprise-it-s-performance-appraisal-time.aspx>
<http://bestmanagementarticles.com>

Teamwork

Keys to Team Building Success

- Author » Susan M. Heathfield
- Source Web Link » http://humanresources.about.com/od/workrelationships/a/play_well.htm
- Related Link » http://humanresources.about.com/od/involvementteams/a/team_culture.htm

Keys to Building Great Work teams

- Author » Suzanne Willis Zoglio
- Source Web Link » http://www.teambuildinginc.com/article_7keys_zoglio.htm
- Related Link » http://www.teambuildinginc.com/article_geese.htm
http://www.teambuildinginc.com/article_teammotivation.htm

Collaboration at Work

- Author » Daniel Robin
- Source Web Link » <http://www.abetterworkplace.com/059.html>
- Related Link » <http://www.helium.com/items/1187093-the-challenges-of-diversity-in-the-workplace>

5. Staff Wellness

How to Get Work-life Balance

- Author » Laurie Bornstein
Source Web Link » http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Create_Your_Ideal_Environment.html
Related Link » <http://management.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=management&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.worklifebalance.com%2F>

Safety in the Workplace

- Author » Tracey Lloyd
Source Web Link » http://human-resources-management.suite101.com/articles.cfm/safety_in_the_workplace
Related Link » http://businessmanagement.suite101.com/article.cfm/understanding_the_staff

Stress Management

- Author » Melinda Smith
Source Web Link » http://helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm
Related Link » <http://stress.about.com/cs/a.htm>

Managing Workplace Stress

- Author » Thomas W. McKee
Source Web Link » <http://www.advantagepoint.com/articles/motivation/art1.html>
Related Link » <http://www.advantagepoint.com/articles/motivation/art1.html>

Get a Life! – Life Work Balance

- Author » Thomas W. McKee
Source Web Link » <http://www.advantagepoint.com/articles/motivation/art8.html>
Related Link » <http://www.advantagepoint.com/articles/motivation/art1.html>

6. Client Orientation

Successful Handling of Customer Service Issues

- Author » Ntsikelelo
Source Web Link » http://soft-skills-development.suite101.com/article.cfm/how_to_increase_your_emotional_intelligence
Related Link » http://soft-skills-development.suite101.com/article.cfm/how_to_listen_for_successful_communication#ixzz0FYtHfuGC&B
http://abuse.suite101.com/article.cfm/how_to_improve_listening_skills

7. Management and leadership

Managing Meetings Effectively

- Author » Diane M. Eade
Source Web Link » <http://www.adv-leadership-grp.com/articles/energy.htm>
Related Link » http://www.managementhelp.org/prsn_prd/basics.htm

Change and Employees' Involvement

- Author » Susan M. Heathfield
Source Web Link » http://humanresources.about.com/od/glossary/a/employee_inv_2.htm
Related Link » <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/24/senge.html?page=0%2C1>

Embracing Change

- Author » Julie Fuimano
Source web Link » <http://change-management.bestmanagementarticles.com/a-21278-embracing-change.aspx>
Related Link » <http://change-managementarticles.com/a-650-changemanagement-revolution-or-evolution.aspx>
<http://change-managementarticles.com/a-15659-management-change-change-the-wrong-approach.aspx>

Personal Courage and Conflict Resolution at Work

- Author » Susan M. Heathfield
- Source web Link » http://humanresources.about.com/cs/conflictresolves/a/conflict_courage.htm
- Related Link » http://humanresources.about.com/od/managementtips/a/conflict_solve.htm
<http://humanresources.about.com/od/conflictresolution/a/fightforright.htm>

Effective Time Management

- Author » Marjorie Geiser
- Source Web Link » http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/time_how_to_use_it_wisely_to_accomplish_your_goals
- Related Links » <http://whakate.com/tag/time-management/>

8. Creativity And problem solving skills

How to Be Creative

- Author » Jacob Cass
- Source Web Link » <http://justcreativedesign.com/2007/11/26/how-to-be-creative/>
- Related Link » <http://justcreativedesign.com/2007/12/27/how-to-boost-your-creativity/>
<http://alecrios.com/how-to-be-creative>

Developing Your Problem-Solving Skills

- Author » Janice Arenofsky
- Source Web Link » http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0HUV/is_4_29/ai_68707326/?tag=content;coll
- Related Link » http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_00.htm

9. Respect for Cultural Diversity

The Benefits of Diversity in the Workplace

187
*Fore more information on these articles and other Staff Development issues,
please contact us on ex – 35268, 33136, 35370 or e-mail us at
SDU@uneca.org*

Author » Emmelyn Mah
Source web Link » <http://www.helium.com/items/1440928-the-challenges-of-diversity-in-the-workplace>
Related Link » <http://www.helium.com/items/1187093-the-challenges-of-diversity-in-the-workplace>

Managing Cultural Diversity

Author » Olufemi Oyedele
Source Web Link » <http://www.helium.com/items/1309945-how-to-manage-diversity-in-the-workplace>
Related Link » <http://www.helium.com/items/1187093-the-challenges-of-diversity-in-the-workplace>

10. Accountability

The Power of Accountability

Author » Dianne Schilling
Source Web Link » <http://www.womensmedia.com/grow/184-the-power-of-accountability.html>
Related Link » <http://www.abetterworkplace.com/048.html>

11. Profession ethics & Integrity

Why People Break Ethics Codes?

Author » Rick Weaver
Source Web Link » <http://ezinearticles.com/?Why-People-Break-Ethics-Codes&id=2744702>
Related Link » <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/story?id=87351>

Ethics in the Workplace

Author » Natalie Rhoden
Source Web Link » <http://www.managerwise.com/article.phml?id=655>
Related Links » <http://ezinearticles.com/?Ethics-In-The-Workplace&id=12475>

<http://www.asaecenter.org/PublicationsResources/articleDetail.cfm?ItemNumber=13073>
http://www.sidcroad.com/Management/ethics_in_the_workplace.html
<http://www.articlesbase.com/human-resources-articles/ethics-in-the-workplace-629384.html>

Conflict Resolution Skills for Healthy Relationships

Author » Elizabeth Scott
Source Web Link » http://stress.about.com/od/relationships/a/conflict_res.htm
Related Links » http://www.gcsheer.org/Articles/conflict%20resolution/Conflict_Resolution.html
http://humanresources.about.com/cs/conflictresolves/a/conflictcourage_2.htm

Bullying in the Workplace

Author » Lyn Witheridge
Source Web Link » <http://www.banbullyingatwork.com/>
Related Link » <http://www.safety-council.org/info/OSH/bullies.html>

Professionalism in the Workplace

Author » Jerry West
Source Web Link » <http://www.webmarketingnow.com/tips/professionalism.html>
Related Link » http://skill-assessment.suite101.com/article.cfm/professionalism_quiz

Office Etiquette

Author » Ian Harrison

Source Web Link » http://www.askmen.com/money/career_60/87b_career.html

Related Link » <http://www.a-to-z-of-manners-and-etiquette.com/office-etiquette.html>

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

